

Identity and the Professionalisation of Charity Shops

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of organising practices and cultural identities amongst those at the top of charity shop organisations ('Heads'). Its main argument is that people's personal identities are crucial in shaping their material practices and therefore the subsequent economic outcomes of these practices. Those wishing to understand the aspects of life conventionally referred to as 'economic' can learn much by investigating the identification processes of the people involved. Similarly, if policy-makers (governmental or organisational) wish to achieve certain 'economic' outcomes, their policies should address processes of identification.

This argument is examined using research into material practices and identity processes in charity shop organisations, in particular the Heads. The thesis questions how the rapid professionalisation of charity shops in the 1980s and 1990s was related to the identifications of a certain generation of charity shop Heads.

Using participant-observation fieldwork of three charity shop organisations and semi-structured interviews with twenty charity shop Heads, it develops theories of identity and theories of professionalism. To theories of identity it adds a five-level understanding of selfhood; a distinction between three separate identification processes; the suggestion that personal, organisational and sectoral identities are related and co-emergent; and the argument that identities must be studied as 'produced-in-interaction' as well as received from 'external' discourses. To theories of professionalism it proposes a move beyond the limited view of 'a professional' as a member of an expert occupational group, towards 'professional' as a fluid but powerfully normative description that can be applied to all organisational actors and activities.

Finally, the thesis offers support for its main argument and policy recommendations for those working with charity shop organisations; and addresses the spatialised nature of identity processes.

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~ 1 ~

Introduction:

Identity and Professionalisation

1.1 Identity and Professionalisation – Summary of the Main Argument

To Stephen Robertson, Head of Shelter Shops, the 'modern culture' of leaner more professional shops, which he believes larger charities will need to adopt to survive, runs contrary to the 'volunteer culture' that thrives in many charity shop organisations (Gillingham & Phelan 1995: 30).

1.1.1 Main Argument

My thesis is that people's personal identities are crucial in shaping their material practices and therefore the subsequent economic outcomes of these practices. Those wishing to understand the aspects of life conventionally referred to as 'economic' can learn much by investigating the identification processes of the people involved. Similarly, if policy-makers (governmental or organisational) wish to achieve certain 'economic' outcomes then their policies should address processes of identification.

This argument will be examined using research into material practices and identity processes in charity shop organisations, in particular the people at the top (referred to as Heads). It questions how the rapid professionalisation of charity shops in the 1980s and 1990s was related to the identifications of a certain generation of charity shop Heads joining the sector in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

These Heads were the first to have sole responsibility for running chains of charity shops. Before them, charity shops were usually run only by volunteers without any control from the charity receiving the money. Sometimes a senior manager from the charity – perhaps the head of fundraising, the finance director, or the chief executive – was given nominal ‘responsibility’ for the shops amongst their other duties but they rarely tried to control or even influence the shops. As some shops got into financial difficulties, however, or some became extremely successful but expressed ‘unauthorised’ representations of the charity to press and public, measures were taken to better control the shops and to run them ‘more professionally’. The charities felt an increasing desire to control this distant, vibrant, growing phenomenon bearing their valuable name.

The main measure adopted was the employment of a retail specialist from the private sector. These newly recruited, second generation charity shop Heads took over from the uninvolved and non-specialised first generation and began controlling and ‘professionalising’ the charity shops. In the view of this thesis, the way this was done and the development path that was adopted were fundamentally related to the personal, organisational and sectoral identifications of these second generation Heads, not just to the actual business needs of the charity shops. Further, the charity shop professionalisation process continued beyond the point where it benefited the shops in economic terms and began damaging them. This happened *because* professionalisation was and is driven by the Heads’ desires to assert their identities, not by analyses of the business needs of the shops and their market.

Stephen Robertson, cited at the start of this section, is one of these second generation Heads. In the quote he neatly encapsulates the sense that professionalisation is a self-identity counterposed to a voluntary ‘other’. Professionalisation is deemed ‘modern’, implying that the volunteer culture is ‘traditional’. The quote also indicates that those being researched are themselves keenly aware of the importance of ‘cultural’ issues to charity shops.

Theories of personal identity are therefore crucial to the analysis of ‘economic’ change in the charity shops sector. As discussed below, one of the main reasons for this is their unclear purposes, trapped between the demands of ‘charity’ and ‘retailing’. Whilst no claims are made for the *necessary* generalisability of this argument to other economic areas, there are suggestions in various literatures that the means and ends of most organisations are unclear and open to negotiation. For Bastons, “the fundamental problem facing management today is ... understanding what, in fact, is being practised” (1990: 190). Halford and Savage’s study of a bank similarly demonstrated that “rather than there being a coherent new managerialism, managers find themselves in conflict over the sorts of business they are supposed to be carrying out” (1997: 116). When organisational purposes are unclear, personal identities are likely to be significant in determining organising practices. If organisations with unclear purposes are increasingly common (or increasingly noticed) then it is probable that the findings here are relevant to other study areas.

1.1.2 Why Charity Shops?

There are at least five reasons why charity shop organisations are so fruitful for analysing the importance of identity processes in economic change. First, their relatively recent development and growth means that we have access to their early 'formative years', through first person interviews with those second generation Heads. Second, they remain inchoate. Processes of identity formation and professionalisation are still developing and can be observed through interviews and participant-observation. Also, debates about their future development are particularly pertinent to policy decisions about the sector. Third, charity shops are inherently and fundamentally contradictory – they are both charities and businesses, both caring and commercial. At the very centre of the identity-fuelled professionalisation process was the flight from the 'charity' and 'caring' side of these binaries towards 'business' and 'commercialism'. Current debates about the sector's future remain squarely focused on these tensions at the heart of the charity shop project. The strength of these tensions means they are felt and expressed by Heads themselves, like Stephen Robertson, allowing research to remain close to the concerns and language of the subjects. Fourth, in terms of practical research access, I had good existing networks within the charity shop sector. My political positioning within the sector and the research is discussed in ~ 3 ~ *Research and Methodology*. Finally, as the next section (1.2) demonstrates, the charity shops sector is significant and worthy of analysis in its own right.

This research does not study charity shop organisations because they are unique in their potentially confusing organisational purposes ('are we a business or are we a charity?') but because they are *not* unique in this, as Bastons and Halford and Savage demonstrated. Nevertheless, the confusion is more visible in charity shop organisations because they are relatively young and face very stark conflicts over their purposes. They therefore offer an excellent example of organisational confusion and its implications for the creation and practice of identities, organising practices, and economic outcomes.

As a phenomenon, charity shops offer social scientists dozens of potential insights. Five brief examples for cultural-economic geography will suffice. First, charity shops interrogate definitions of 'capitalism' – although they trade, exploit their workers, and exist to make profits, they are not capitalist. If none of these things determines capitalism, what is uniquely capitalist? Just ownership of the means of production? Not the extraction of surplus labour? Charity shops sit just on the 'charity' side of the boundary between charity and capitalism, right next to The Body Shop and The Co-operative Bank just the other side. Charity shops question whether exploitative managerial practices are in fact inherent in *organisation* rather than capitalism.

Second, the existence of volunteers as a key 'class' of workers offers potential insight into studies of the division of labour, of worker identities, and of power. Volunteers are far less subject to fears of redundancy, bad references, or the downward pressures on wages from the 'reserve army' of the unemployed. They may also express a sense of moral superiority in relations with their so-called 'managers'. The operation of power relations and resistance in

charity shop organisations is therefore potentially fascinating. Third, the various processes involved in the transmission and transformation of objects in charity shops – donating, sorting, cleaning, displaying, selling, buying and subsequent use – all offer potential insight into the nature of consumption processes and the inscription of meaning and identity onto objects. Indeed, this is the subject of a recent geographical study of charity shops (Gregson *et al* 2000).

Fourth, because the sector grew from just one charity shop in 1948 to over 7,000 in 2002 and spread rapidly around the country, they could be studied in terms of location and dispersion. With sustained criticism of the number of charity shops from some quarters (see Figure 1.1) and their noted agglomeration tendency (Goodall 1997b), there are a set of research questions around agglomeration, competition, growth, key location factors, and the reasons and conditions for their move from temporary-tertiary to permanent-primary high street locations. Finally, the shops themselves are geographically divided between 'front rooms' of display and sale and 'back rooms' of preparation, suggesting an exciting subject for a dramaturgical approach to the constitution of retail space (Goffman 1959, 1974).

Whilst these five possibilities are not central to the thesis argument they are nonetheless relevant sub-texts and they remain potential foci for other charity shop studies.

1.1.3 Why Heads?

Having justified the focus on charity shops, I must justify the specific focus on Heads. There are three main reasons in addition to that of access. First, I wish to investigate those who are ostensibly powerful, to show that they are as insecure, unsure, and confused as anyone else. This may seem obvious, but some Marxian approaches, for example, tend to demonise those at the top of organisations, while much organisational theory appears to bestow unlimited authority on them. Latour (1993: 125-6) has also noted this tendency:

Take some small business-owner hesitatingly going after a few market shares, some conqueror trembling with fever, some poor scientist tinkering in his lab, a lowly engineer piecing together a few more or less favourable relationships of force, some stuttering and fearful politician; turn the critics loose on them, and what do you get? Capitalism, imperialism, science, technology, domination – all equally absolute, systematic, totalitarian. In the first scenario, the actors were trembling; in the second, they are not. The actors in the first scenario could be defeated; in the second, they no longer can. In the first scenario, the actors were still quite close to the modest work of fragile and modifiable mediations; now they are purified, and they are all equally formidable.

Whilst Latour may caricature both the power and the powerlessness, he nevertheless reminds us how easy it is to bring our prejudices to our studies. No positions are 'politics-free' of course, but moral presumptions about those we study should be avoided as far as possible. One aim of this study is to 'humanise' those in charge of organisations; not to defend their actions but to explain them. As Dingwall noted, the temptation to favour the 'underdog' at the expense of everybody else is a corruption of the ethic of 'fair dealing' that good participant-observation

relies upon. He suggests we ask of any study: "Does it convey as much understanding of its villains as its heroes? Are the privileged treated as having something serious to say or simply dismissed as evil, corrupt or greedy without further enquiry?" (1992: 179).

The second reason for studying Heads is the assumption that their position as the most powerful person in the organisation allows them to shape it as they wish. This assumption is obviously open to challenge. Many empirical studies of managers (Hales 1986) stress their relative impotence. The thesis focuses on the Heads because they *assume*, with those around them, that they are more powerful than anyone else in the organisation. They are most closely identified with particular representations of their organisations and the charity shops sector and with normative expectations of the charity shop organisation and the professionalisation process. They have some ability, however circumscribed, to impose their discursive practices and narratives of charity shop organising onto others. This is particularly so in charity shop organisations because their relative youth makes them highly susceptible to charismatic leadership of the type identified by Weber (see Clegg 1994 for a useful, recent summary). Their inherent contradictions also leave more room for organisational discourses to be generated anew rather than simply received and repeated. Personal identity and professionalisation therefore point to study of the Heads.

Gregson *et al* (2002) note these discourses of professionalisation and assess how they are spatially displaced in actual shops. However, whilst their approach offers a strong understanding of the contextual nature of the shops themselves, the Heads are differentiated and relatively decontextualised compared with the shops. This is likely to be related to the choice of methods – participant-observation in the shops, interviews with the Heads and middle managers. This thesis complements their work by asking not just 'what are the Heads' discourses?' but also 'why these discourses and how are they practised?' A focus on identity construction is, I argue, essential if we are to have anything more than a basic understanding of Heads' talk. Additionally, it is not the case that professionalisation is the only discursive strategy or, indeed, that the term professionalisation is universally understood (see 1.1.4 below). In fact, this thesis demonstrates the contrary. Discourses of 'retail', in particular, are challenged by 'charity' in far more robust ways than Gregson *et al* suggest. A detailed analysis of the Heads is therefore necessary if we are to understand the complexity and multiplicity of their discursive practices.

The third reason for focusing on the Heads is their role as the key mediator of 'external' relations. One of the methodological devices developed in the thesis is the study of inter-organisational relations as a means of understanding organisational identity. I argue that it makes sense to talk of an organisation *having* an identity – for it is ascribed a set of values about what it is and should be – and that it makes sense to study organisational identities as 'selves' in relation to organisational 'others'. A later chapter, ~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors*, examines the Heads' relationships with representatives of other organisations: their parent

charities, other charity shop organisations, and private sector businesses. Through these relations, both personal and organisational identities take shape and, I argue, begin to relate to each other. In other words, the Heads' personal identities become entangled in the identities of their organisations. This is why the *professionalisation* of charity shop organisations, both materially and discursively, is intimately related to the personal identities of the Heads.

A further reason for focusing on these various networks that entangle the Heads is to avoid fetishising the Heads themselves or their individualism and to avoid repeating the error of decontextualisation. They can work and talk and practice only *within* their own personal histories (~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift*), their organisational contexts (~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism*) and their wider networks (~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors*).

This section has so far introduced the overall argument and justified the general substantive approach. It ends with two important clarifications of my position.

1.1.4 Clarification 1: Diversity

The thesis stresses that the professionalisation of charity shops (both its material outcomes and its material discursive practices) has been characterised by widely divergent approaches, from the profit-maximising, no-holds-barred imitation of retail outlets to the deliberate sacrifice of profits in return for a 'charitable' environment for volunteers and 'charitable' prices for customers. Professionalisation has not been a unidirectional and uncontested process. It has been the dominant trope of charity shop organising, but the sector is characterised by diversity.

Both Parsons (2002) and Gregson *et al* (2002) stress the diversity of the charity shops sector at shop level. This diversity stems from the different approaches of Heads as well as from the different responses of shops to attempts to manage them, but both these studies steer away from an emphasis on diversity at head office level. This research focuses on these differing approaches to charity shop organising and argues, further, that charity shop Heads display personal attachment to these approaches. These personal attachments are intimately related to their different reasons for entering charity shops, examined in ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift*, and their different assertions of identities of professionalism, explored in ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism*. Their approaches to charity shop organising are, perhaps primarily, identity assertions, expressions of more personally articulated and less conscious beliefs, habits, assumptions and vocabularies. They are not simply the dispassionately held outcomes of rational thought or economic analysis, and even if they were, these would be particular assertions of particular organisational identities. Different understandings of how charity shops should be organised and different views of professionalism are thus inherently *cultural* and inherently about *identity*.

The participant-observation fieldwork involved in-depth study of three charity shop organisations chosen because of their different organising styles. All are financially successful but, as the research analysis reveals, adopt very different approaches to charity shop organising. Each case offers a very different slant on the professionalisation of charity shops.

1.1.5 Clarification 2: Identity

The charity shop world's primary contribution to identity theory comes through a focus on the under-researched 'organising identities' of charity shop Heads. These are more fluid, more inchoate, and less obviously identifiable than the 'traditional' identities of gender, age, ethnicity, and occupation and income (class), yet are as crucial in determining organisational practices and material economic outcomes.

As the next chapter notes (2.4.4), the *productive* processes of identity formation have been underplayed in some other studies of organisational identity (Casey 1995, du Gay 1996a, 1996b). These have tended to see identities as 'received' from 'external' discourses. This thesis does not seek to replace these somewhat over-structuralist accounts of identity with an over-individualist account. Rather it adds balance to the debate about workplace identities by pointing to the existence of important processes of identity and discourse *production*. Whilst retail workers might feel a new discourse of entrepreneurialism impacting upon their identities (du Gay 1996b), who 'produced' this discourse in its particular form, and how and why? These questions are addressed here, for charity shop professionalisation.

This is not to say that 'traditional' identities are unimportant to charity shops. They affect charity shops as much as they affect every other aspect of life and are truly powerful and insidious. In terms of *gender*, it is quite clear that charity shops were typically a 'world of women', drawing on women's knowledges about clothing and small-scale local organisation (Prochaska, 1988). Increasingly, men entered charity shop organisations and, it appears, drove the professionalisation process. Was professionalisation a masculinisation process? Did men come into charity shops and bring professionalisation with them or did professionalisation come along, and then attract men? Are the men that enter charity shop organising 'less or differently masculine' than their private sector counterparts? The thesis does not address these questions, because of its focus on *organising* identities. In the three organisations where the participant-observation fieldwork was conducted, we see a correlation between their approaches to organising and the gender of their senior management teams. In the more assertively 'commercial', pro-private sector case, referred to as ShopsCom, all the top posts except one are held by men. In the more assertively 'charity', pro-volunteer case, referred to as VolShop, all the top posts are held by women. In the small hospice charity referred to as HospiShop, where identity is more relaxed and practical than consciously and reflexively assertive, all employees are women.

In terms of age, charity shop professionalisation almost exactly mirrors the subordination of an aged population of volunteers to the demands of the middle-aged second-generation Heads, and the resistance of older volunteers to these younger 'upstarts'. Knowledges were constructed differently by the two age groups, the younger Heads calling up their 'professional expertise' as retailers, the older volunteers calling up their wisdom and experience of charity shops, with neither respecting the others' knowledge. The paid staff brought in as shop managers were also usually middle aged, but female, better able to identify with the older female volunteers against the 'men at head office'. In terms of ethnicity, the lack of non-white faces was startling. The whiteness was broken only twice in twenty shops I worked in, by a black Nigerian volunteer and a Pakistani volunteer. It is unclear why there was so little non-white representation in the shops, but it at least points to the importance of 'identity' in the construction of notions of volunteering. It is difficult to talk in terms of class. Traditionally, charity shop volunteers tend to be middle class, though this is changing. Volunteers, of course, problematise the whole notion of class, at least in a Marxist sense. The Heads and their other senior managers are also middle class, yet they often note that their own 'retail' backgrounds are commonly portrayed as lower status than other professions like law, medicine or advertising (Nixon 2000).

So the traditional identities affect charity shops. Yet I would argue that they do not affect charity shops any *more* than they affect other aspects of life and for this reason they are not at the centre of the thesis. The main contribution that a study of charity shop organising can make to identity theory rests not in further research of these crucial and well-studied socio-demographic categories but in a development of theories of workplace identities and discursive practices amongst senior managers in a situation of high confusion and rapid change.

1.2 The Significance of Charity Shops

Key data about charity shops can contextualise them in social and economic terms and demonstrate that they are significant enough phenomena to study in their own right. Between them, at least 300 UK charities run around 7,000 individual charity shops¹ selling wholly or mainly donated second-hand goods (Goodall 2001b). These shops constitute 2.2% of all UK retail units and 21% of all clothing outlets (British Retail Consortium 2001). The growth of charity shops has been so rapid and so visible that they have been targeted by the campaigns of the Federation of Small Businesses and its allies. Figure 1.1 gives a typical example. As one Head remarked to me in interview:

Unfortunately the first thing most members of the public say about charity shops if you ask them what they know, is 'There are too many of them, aren't there?' That's because they've heard and ingested the uninformed carping of the small business lobby. [Hilary Quinn]

In 2000-2001 charity shops generated £422m a year in sales and £78m in profit (Goodall 2001c). This £422m is 3.0% of estimated total voluntary sector income and 6.5% of 'voluntary' income (which includes public charitable donations and excludes government grants, sales of services, etc.) (Passey, Hems and Jas 2000: 3-4). The annual costs of charity shops (£344m) account for 2.6% of the total expenditure of the voluntary sector (ibid: 3).

In financial terms, then, charity shops are a relatively minor feature of the *total* UK voluntary sector. However they are a crucial component in the total fundraising strategy of those charities that do run them. Ninety-two of the Top 500 UK Fundraising Charities operate charity shops (Pharoah and Street 2001: passim²). The fifty-seven Top 500 charities for which figures are provided receive £256m from their shops, which is one third of their 'voluntary' income (£770m) and a fifth of their total income (ibid: 9). At least 70 of the estimated 154 hospice charities run shops (Goodall 2001b). Some charities are very reliant on shops. Scope, for example, derives 60% of all its voluntary income from shops, Sue Ryder derives 65%, BREAK derives 80%, and Teeside Hospice derives 87%. Three of the ten largest charities in the country, Oxfam, British Heart Foundation and Help the Aged, receive over 40% of voluntary income from their charity shops (Pharoah and Street 2001). Shops are therefore a major contributor to the charitable funds and valuable work of many charities.

In addition to their financial contribution, charity shops are one of the most visible aspects of charities. Used correctly they can be one of the most successful awareness-raising and brand-raising weapons in a charity's armoury. They also contribute to wider society in a number of

¹ By 'charity shops' I mean shops run for a charity and selling wholly or mainly donated goods, therefore excluding the retail outlets selling souvenirs at English Heritage sites, for example.

² Pharoah and Street give charity shop data for only fifty-seven of the 500 charities in their table, but at least thirty-five other charities in the table are known to run charity shops. Their data is for 1998-99.

ways. They significantly reduce quantities of annual landfill waste. Recent estimates suggest that 100,000 tonnes of clothing passes through the charity shops sector every year (ACS 2001). This is roughly equivalent to 4.5 kg per household every year, or one black sack. Waste Watch (2001) estimates that 26 million tonnes of waste is produced in the UK each year, which approximates to 1.2 tonnes per person. Charity shops textiles therefore account for about 0.4% of all UK waste. Given that this figure is only for textiles and most other charity shop stock has a higher density, it would be reasonable to suggest that at least one half of one percent of UK waste is kept out of landfill by the activities of charity shops, probably more.

Charity shops are also major employers of both paid and unpaid staff. The 7,000 charity shops employ between them around 11,000 members of paid staff and 115,000 volunteers. These volunteers work on average five hours a week for forty-eight weeks a year, which is a total volunteer contribution of 27.6m hours a year. At the current minimum wage (£4.10) this equates to over £110m 'donated' to charity shops via free labour. To work in a charity shop is to know that the value of many volunteers' work is well above the minimum wage. It is also to know the social benefits that volunteers derive from their work, a point developed in more detail by Parsons (2002). In addition, a new wave of quasi-volunteers, such as people serving Community Service Orders, unemployed young people engaged in training, or people on post-prison parole have enriched the volunteer population of the charity shop, learnt new skills and gained crucial work experience and potential job referees for their curricula vitae (see Maddrell 2000 for an interesting discussion).

Some charity shops are socially useful in deliberately pricing low in order to help those on lower incomes. This practice is now relatively rare, for the professionalisation process involved prioritising the beneficiaries of the charity over the customers of the shop – the archetypal 'starving-in-Africa' over the 'not-that-well-off-in-Bournemouth'. This is one of the reasons that theft from charity shops is rife and haggling and complaints about pricing are more prevalent than in private sector retail stores. Studies of contemporary charity shoppers usually show them to be very diverse, certainly not limited to the poorer sections of society (Goodall 1997a: *passim*, Parsons 2002).

People like to see charities. They like the notion that charities are 'out there' on our high streets rather than just 'out there' in the places we imagine they work (Africa, Romania, Toxteth, or Waterloo). 93% of the population think charity shops are a good way of raising funds for charity (Goodall 1997a: 3), which undoubtedly makes them one of the most popular charity fundraising methods. And we like the fact they aren't just asking us for money, that they offer us something in return. Charity shops give you something tangible in return for your cash 'donation'. Gift and commodity exchange are combined. Last but not least, we like the fact that they recycle things for us, making us feel that the things we were once attached to (often literally) will 'not go to waste', will continue to be useful beyond their usefulness to us. 86% of the population think the best thing to do with unwanted clothes is to donate them to a charity shop (*ibid*).

Finally, the actual goods sold by most charity shops are a source of pleasure to many thousands of people who have found something they want at a price they like. Some of the many purchases I have made in charity shops around the country have undoubtedly brought me pleasure and I have also enjoyed observing this in other people through my general involvement with charity shops and through consultancy research projects for charity shop organisations. Perhaps the critics are correct that we are all simply consumers now; that the western world is devoted to nothing but empty consumerism; that desire is our new sovereign; and that pleasure in objects is our weakness. I am sceptical about this dark picture of our contemporary world, but even if these critics are right, at least charity shops bring *more* pleasure than ordinary consumption. They offer the charity 'hit' (feeling morally good about your purchase) which magically undermines the guilt sometimes felt when buying stuff we don't really need. They offer the excitement of the hunt through the racks and rails. They offer much wider choice and rarer and more unusual goods than private sector retail stores. For my friend who found that no private sector retailer would sell her a shawl, because they were not what the buyers were buying and not what the manufacturers were manufacturing, Barnardo's in Brixton was the answer. Charity shops offer the chance to meet and be helped by volunteers who are not on commission and who treat you like a person not a unit sale. Finally they offer the constant anticipation of a bargain and the occasional rarefied thrill of finding one. These pleasures are a key social contribution of charity shops.

Figure 1.1 "Too many charity shops?" Editorial, The Bournemouth Daily Echo, 12-XII-97

FORD ON FRIDAY
Editorial tel: 01202 411250 Fax: 01202 292115

Telling it
like it is
by Sarah Ford



Too much for charity

IF SOMEONE doesn't watch out, Wimborne Road in Winton is going to become the charity shop capital of the South.

Two more - Barnardos and the PDOSA - are due to open any minute, and added to Cancer Research, Scope, Age Concern, British Heart Foundation, St John Ambulance, the Red Cross and Sue Ryder (not to mention the Salvation Army just off the main road and Oxfam a bit further towards Moordown which has its own batch) all add up to overkill.

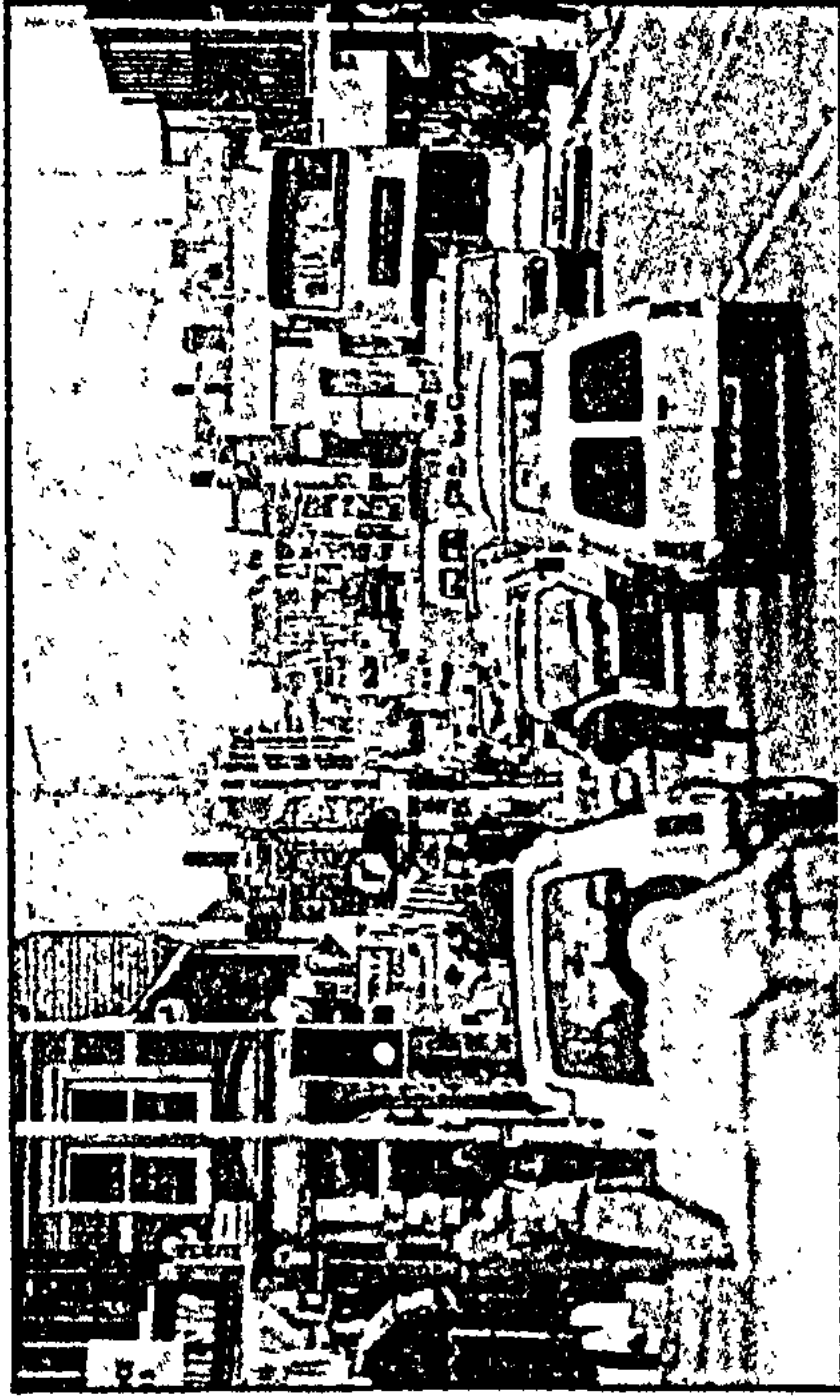
Let me say straight away that I have nothing against charity shops. They do an excellent job in raising much-needed funds and are ideal when you need to have a good clear-out and can't be bothered with a car boot or jumble sale.

They're also just the place for picking up the odd bargain, if you're prepared to be patient and keep looking. Even purchases have been seen on the Antiques Roadshow.

But when an area starts to suffer from a proliferation, then it's time to call a halt.

Surely something can be done with regard to planning permission. I may be wrong, but I'm sure charity shops don't pay business rates and so a check can be kept on them and, while a shop is a shop is a shop, there's surely a difference between these charity outlets and "proper" ones.

Winton used to be such an interesting and lively shopping area. Now it's becoming rather sad and downtrodden. It needs an injection of new blood.



OVERKILL: Wimborne Road, Winton has too many charity shops

1.3 The Thesis Chapters

The thesis consists of two parts plus a conclusion. In ~ *Part One ~ Resources: Literatures, Research, Context* three different resources are used to contextualise and support the empirical analyses. The first, ~ 2 ~ *Literatures: Shops, Identity and Organisation*, offers critical accounts of three relevant academic literatures: studies of shops, studies of identity, and studies of organisations. Their area of overlap forms the main focus of the thesis – a study of organisational identities amongst senior charity shop managers. The second, ~ 3 ~ *Research and Methodology*, outlines the ontological and epistemological positions, discusses the political role and position of the researcher, explains how the data were generated and analysed, and introduces the research sample. The final resource, ~ 4 ~ *Context: The Professionalisation of Charity Shops*, offers data about the growth of charity shops and changes in charity shop organising. This is both the context within which charity shop Heads operate and the material, economic phenomenon that are explained using analysis of the Heads' identification processes and discursive practices. This model of using qualitative study of the accounts of the researcher and the researched to explain the statistical regularities and quantitatively analysed outcomes of social activity, is similar to that used by Bourdieu's anthropological studies (Jenkins 1992: 59-61). Following Bourdieu, the data in this chapter are offered as descriptions of social reality (which is not to mistake them for social reality itself). They are "the starting point ... the thing to be explained" (ibid).

In ~ *Part Two ~ Analysis: Charity Shops and Identity* these processes of charity shop professionalisation are explained using three different cuts into the identity processes of charity shop Heads. ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift* examines the Heads' personal identities by analysing their entry into the charity shop sector and their first experiences of charity shop organising. These are placed into the context of their personal career history. The chapter develops understanding of the most formative period in the organising identities of the charity shop Heads and the consequent impact of these nascent identities on charity shops and the professionalisation process. ~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors* assesses the relationships between the Heads and three other forms of organisation: their parent charities, other charity shop organisations, and private sector businesses. These relationships, it is argued, offer insight into the processes of 'self'-formation in relation to organisational 'others'. Because these 'others' are multiple and different, we consider whether multiple and contradictory 'selves' also exist, or whether a coherent charity shop 'self' has emerged. The relationship between the identities of the Heads, their organisations and the sector are also explored. The professionalisation of charity shops is seen to be closely related to the construction of these various identities. ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism* focuses on contemporary identification processes. It indicates the crucial importance of discourses of 'professionalism' in the assertion of Heads' identities and demonstrates that these discourses are highly contested. It contrasts these narratives with analysis of Heads asserting their identities in practice. The final chapter, ~

8 ~ *Conclusions*, summarises the key findings of the analysis of charity shops, identity and professionalism, and draws out their potential implications for theory and policy. That chapter is based on six contributions to knowledge made by this thesis.

1. It offers an innovative combination of five empirical materials: charity shop organisations; the voluntary sector; the heads of organisations; discourses of professionalism; and identities of organising.
2. It provides the first analysis of charity shop professionalisation from the perspective of those who made it happen; and offers policy recommendations about the future of charity shop organising.
3. It develops theories of identity: by positing a five-level understanding of selfhood; by distinguishing three separate identification processes; by suggesting that personal, organisational and sectoral identities are related and co-emergent; and by arguing that identities must be studied as 'produced-in-interaction' as well as received from 'external' discourses.
4. It develops theories of professionalism by moving beyond the limited view of 'a professional' as a member of an expert occupational group towards 'professional' as a fluid but powerfully normative description that can be applied to all organisational actors and activities.
5. It demonstrates the overall thesis argument: that identity processes are a crucial influence on the activity of people in organisational contexts and the outcomes of that activity. In other words, cultural analysis is indispensable to explanations of economic phenomena.
6. Finally, it addresses the ways in which identity processes and economic outcomes are mediated through places and spaces.

The nature of these contributions will become clear to the reader as the arguments develop.

~ Part One ~

Resources:

Literatures, Research, Context

Part One contains three resources to contextualise and support the empirical analyses in Part Two. ~ 2 ~ *Literatures: Shops, Identity and Organisation* offers critical accounts of three relevant literatures which, in combination, define the focus of the research. ~ 3 ~ *Research and Methodology* outlines: my ontological, epistemological and political positions; generation and analysis of data; and selection of cases. Finally, ~ 4 ~ *Context: The Professionalisation of Charity Shops* offers a history of the professionalisation of charity shops. This provides background information on the operation of charity shops and the performance of the sector. It is this history that will be explained by reference to the identity processes of charity shop Heads.

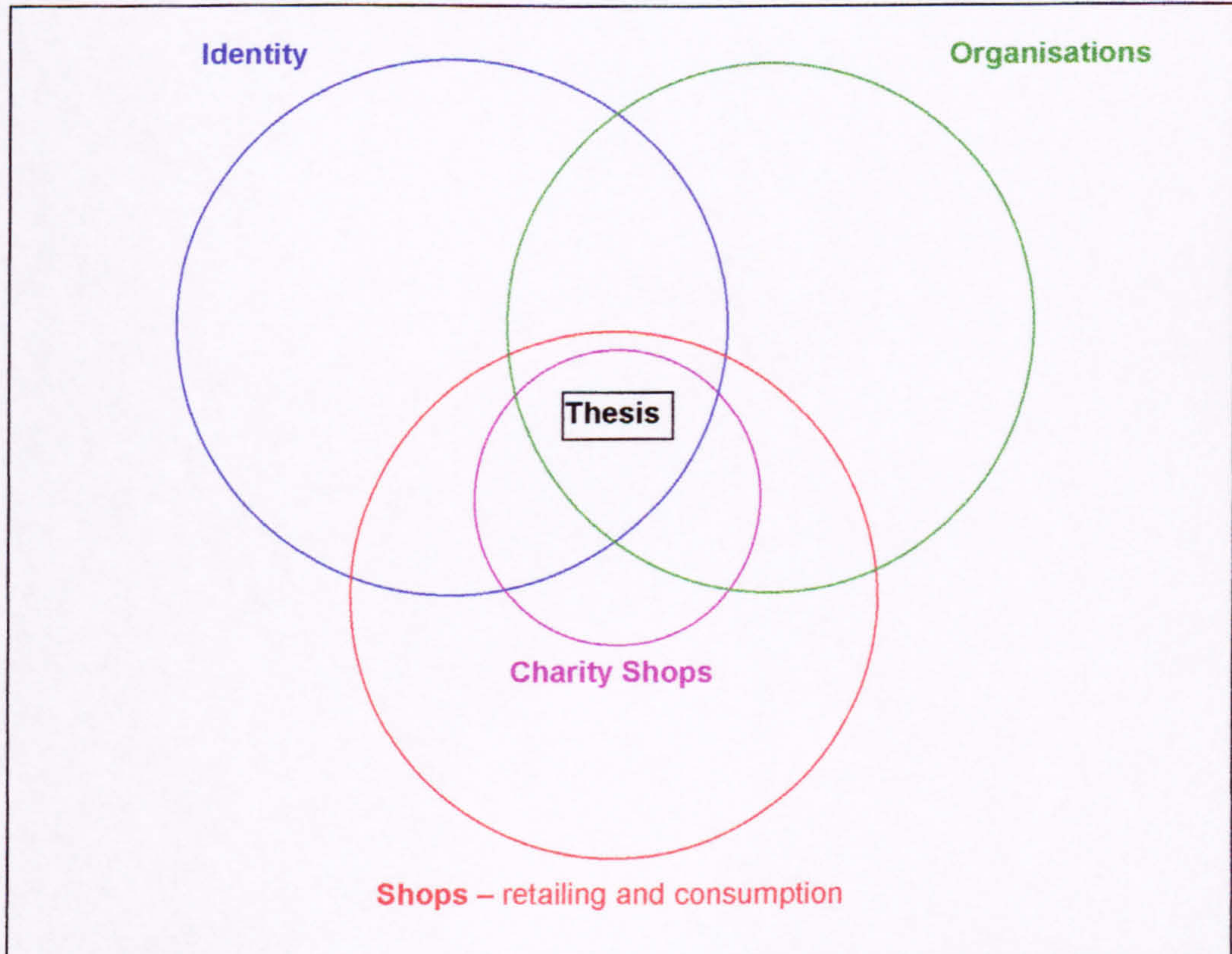
~ 2 ~

Literatures: Shops, Identity and Organisation

2.1 Between Three Literatures

This thesis studies the identities of Heads in charity shop organisations. This chapter therefore offers critical accounts of three broad literatures: studies of identity, studies of organisation, and studies of shops (often divided into 'retailing' studies and 'consumption' studies). The thesis sits within the overlap between these, as Figure 2.1 shows.

Figure 2.1 Schematic Map of Broad Thesis Subject Areas



Each literature is discussed in turn. First (2.2) is a critical account of writings about shops, often divided into 'retailing' and 'consumption'. The validity and usefulness of this distinction and the related distinction between 'economy' and 'culture' are explored. The limited literature on charity shops is also introduced. Second (2.3) is an assessment of identity theories, a popular yet divisive notion in contemporary social science and the key theoretical issue in this thesis. Third (2.4) is an examination of organisation theory and studies of organisational culture, organising identities, senior managers, and voluntary organisation.

2.2 Studying Shops – Production and Consumption

2.2.1 Introduction

In terms of legal ownership and overall orientation, charity shop organisations are located within the voluntary sector. But there is no doubt that in terms of everyday organising most of them can be perceived as retailers. Whatever else, they are certainly focused on the production of shops. This section therefore critically assesses literatures about shops (2.2.2) including charity shops (2.2.3). It also examines the possibilities for transcending the production-consumption distinction (2.2.4) and geographical debates about culture and economy (2.2.5).

2.2.2 Shops: Production and Consumption

The vast majority of research into shops has focused on the private sector and is divided broadly into two camps, those concerned with the *production* of private sector retailing and those concerned with the *consumption* of private sector retail products. These two camps might also be characterised as studies of 'retailing' and 'shopping'.

Studies of private sector retailing usually focus on one industrial segment, such as department stores (Emmet and Jeuck 1950, Rees 1969, Briggs 1984), out-of-town shopping centres (Shields 1989, Hopkins 1990, Goss 1993, Guy 1998, Lowe 2000), supermarkets (Bowlby 1997), clothing stores (Sigsworth 1990, Mort and Thompson 1994), food stores (Hughes 1999, Wrigley 1999, 2000), and others (Chapman 1974, Raucher 1991, Hilton 1998); on certain organisational forms, such as chain stores (Scott 1994, Winship 1999, 2000); or on retailing in general (Wrigley and Lowe 1996, 2000, Shaw *et al* 1998). Many of these studies show how specific retail firms or industries are 'constructed' in political, economical, cultural or social ways.

Geographical studies of retailing have often focused on planning issues (Lowe 2000), the built environment (Goss 1993), spatial location (Wrigley 2000), and international comparisons (Hughes 1999). Analysis rarely goes below the scale of the individual firm and entire retail sectors or regions are the most common focus. This thesis places greater focus on individual humans within organisational and sectoral contexts than is general in this literature. It is a multi-scale, multi-site, multi-context analysis designed to explicate the relationships between processes at different scales. This point is explored further in a discussion of the literatures surrounding 'Organisation' (2.4).

The second strand of research into private sector 'shops' is studies of shopping. These also cluster around different industries or products. Four general approaches to shopping as consumption can be identified: examinations of the skilfulness of consumers (Friedberg 1993, Slater 1993, 2000, Clarke 1998), analyses of consumption as an identity-expressing and identity-generating process (Porter-Benson 1986, Huws 1988, Cohen 1993, Dowling 1993, Gabriel and Lang 1995, Domosh 1996, Gurney 1996, Carter 1997, Miller and Rose 1997, Miller et al 1998), assessments of the production of consumption by retailers, advertisers and marketers (Whitwell 1989, Nava 1995, Morean 1996, Mort 1996, 2000, Ohmann 1996, Lien 1997, 2000), and studies of the symbolic manipulation of material objects (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Miller 1987, 1998, 2000).

These four types of approach are not mutually exclusive. Many texts could be placed under more than one of these categories, such as Slater's (2000) study of the symbolism of sexpics and the identities of sexpics traders as well as the skilfulness of the traders. Likewise, Dowling (1993) examines the relationship between identity-expression and identity-generation and the symbolism of commodities. A number of studies assess the role and nature of consumption within the context of capitalism (Fine and Leopold 1993, Glennie and Thrift 1993, Mort 1996, Slater and Tonkiss 2000) or everyday life (Mackay 1997). Finally, some studies have focused on explicitly geographical aspects of consumption (Jackson 1993, Jackson and Thrift 1995, Crang 1996, 2000).

Much of this work has involved a rekindled interest in objects and things, or retailing's 'products', resulting from a sense that consumption is an active and creative human process that is related to the generation and expression of personal identities and bound up with the time and place specificities of material entities (Miller 1998). However, there is a danger of over-privileging objects and the processes surrounding them, while underplaying the experiences and processes of shopping itself. In charity shop consumption, for example, many of the most important experiences are somewhat independent of the particular product purchased: the hunt, the performance of expertise in assessing the goods, the glee of the bargain and the charity 'hit' that reduces the guilt sometimes associated with spending money. In this case the *process of purchasing* is as important, if not more so, than the present and future *consumption of the product* itself (Chattoe 2000 and Parsons 2000 have begun to make similar points). For many people charity shopping is a leisure activity and its processes play an important role in constituting personal identity – "I am a charity shopper. I know how to find a bargain. I know what's overpriced. I know quality when I feel it. I am a canny charity shopper."

Research into retailing and shopping, selling and buying, has not been limited wholly to the private sector. Recently a number of studies of 'marginal', informal or non-private-sector 'shops' have emerged, not least by geographers. These have involved research into spaces like garage and car boot sales (Herrmann 1997, Gregson and Crewe 1997, 1998, Gregson et al

1997, Crewe and Gregson 1998), nearly new sales and informal clothing exchange (Corrigan 1995, Clarke 2000), and charity shops (see 2.2.3 below).

Unlike studies of private sector shops, there is a tendency in these studies to favour consumption rather than production, shopping rather than retailing. This indicates the degree to which the 'product' focus of consumption studies lends itself well to study of novel product types, particularly second-hand objects that are in the process of ending one stage of their thing-lives and beginning a new one. However, for this same reason, these studies are also quicker to address the 'production' aspects of these marginal or second-hand spaces of buying and selling, not least because, in the case of second-hand products, the seller of an object was once its buyer and even the process of reselling is consumption, investing and ascribing the thing with symbols, meanings, and values (and prices). Clarke (2000), for example, describes the processes of buying and selling amongst mothers at a nearly new sale of children's clothes, and notes the similarity of these production and consumption activities. Buying and selling is sometimes performed by the same person at different times during the sale, as they go from 'back stall' to 'front stall', and both 'activities' use similar processes of performing motherhood and expressing mothering knowledge and expertise. In other words, a single set of processes is expressed in both selling and buying. Likewise, one implication of Gregson and Crewe's study (1998) was that in the space of the car boot sale both buying and selling practices were characterised by similar processes and discourses. Similar points have been made by du Gay (1996b) for private sector retailing, as discussed later.

Thus one of the major benefits of studying second-hand goods is the questioning of the seller-buyer, retailing-shopping and production-consumption binaries. The implied argument is that the seller in second-hand 'production' is engaged in 'consumption' processes similar to the buyer, especially through the symbolic ascription of meaning to objects and the way personal identities are implicated by this. It then becomes legitimate and necessary to ask how far this argument can be applied to 'first-hand' production and consumption spaces. In other words, does the 'production' of 'new goods' also involve 'consumption' processes? Do producers, sellers, and retailers engage in a set of processes in relation to material objects, symbolic meaning and personal identity that have until now been associated only with consumers, buyers and shoppers? This brings 'advertising' to mind, and indeed that is discussed when we return to these questions, after an account of charity shop literatures.

2.2.3 On Charity Shops

It is unsurprising that charity shops have become a focus for academic study in recent years. As Home and Maddrell (2000) note, charity shops themselves have become very visible because of their number and high street prominence. The fact that they will recruit almost anyone as a volunteer for a short weekly slot, even an academic, also makes them almost

perfect for participant-observation fieldwork. In terms of research accessibility, it's a case of 'turn up and you're in', and pick a half day that suits you. Yet they are fascinating places in their own right, given the never-ending surprise involved in opening bags of donated goods (sometimes unpleasant, sometimes thrilling, always fun) and their interesting and diverse paid staff, volunteers, customers and donors. Of course, this particular thesis centres on charity shop organisations (particularly the organisational heads) rather than the shops themselves, which has quite different implications for research accessibility, as the next chapter demonstrates.

Writings about charity shops fall into four main categories – writings for the charity shops sector itself, statistical summaries of the sector's scale and performance, writings on the 'new goods' issue, and academic studies – each assessed below.

Writings for the charity shop sector itself have centred on the Association of Charity Shops, its predecessor the Charity Shops Group, and the Charities Advisory Trust (the charity that initially established, hosted and subsidised the Charity Shops Group). Blume (1995) offered a handbook for charity shop managers and senior managers that played a role in the process of charity shop professionalisation. A set of internal research reports (Goodall 1997a, 1998, 2001a, and ACS 2001) also offered information about the price and level of rag (the unsold or unsellable textiles charity shops are left with), the scale of house-to-house collection activity (where charity shops post leaflets or plastic sacks through letterboxes requesting donations of unwanted goods), the level of and changes in quarterly sales data for the sector, and the possible social and economic future of charity shops. Three other texts were aimed at charity and charity shop management: Brooks' (1996) error-ridden summary of the tax implications of 'trading' (he even fails to note that selling donated goods is not, legally, trading); Holden's (1996) rather belated argument that retail outlets *are* useful for fundraising; and Framjee's (1996) sound guide to the legal and taxation implications of charity shops.

Senior charity shop managers are also the main audience for (and contributors to) statistical data about the sector. Mintel (1999) and CIR (1992) offered statistical summaries taken from charities' published annual reports and from the Charity Shops Survey. The latter is an annual survey of charity shop sales, costs, profits and other key data based on research conducted by *Charity Finance* magazine (formerly *NGO Finance*) and consisting of direct questionnaire returns from charities themselves (Barker and Harker 1992, Harker 1993, Phelan 1994, 1996, 1997, Gillingham and Phelan 1995, Phelan, Lamont and Howley 1998, Phelan and Goodall 1999, Goodall 2000a, 2000b, 2001b, 2001c). This survey, with the CIR report, form the basis of ~ 4 ~ *The Professionalisation of Charity Shops*, for they illustrate the recent financial detail of the sector's professionalisation and are a symptom of that professionalisation.

The third set of writings concerns the 'new goods' issue, also discussed in ~ 4 ~ *The Professionalisation of Charity Shops*. In essence this consisted of a set of arguments against

charity shops, primarily promulgated by the Federation of Small Businesses and its local supporters and taken up by some local media and local authorities. These were based on the view that charity shops should not receive relief (exemption) from the Uniform Business Rate (the local authority tax for businesses) because they sell 'new goods' – those goods bought new from a manufacturer or wholesaler and resold in the charity shops (classic retailing). This was distinguished from selling second-hand donated goods which was seen as legitimate and what charity shops "should stick to" (Wise 1997). The selling of new goods was dubbed 'unfair competition' and often linked with the general decline of the high street and the argument that there were 'too many' charity shops.

I must declare my interest in this debate, based on a number of interventions under the auspices of the Charities Advisory Trust (CAT) such as research (Goodall 1997b, Goodall and Blume 1997), letters to various media and lobbying of central and local government. It is therefore inappropriate for me to comment in much detail on this debate. The main interventions other than my own are Wise's (1997) simplistic repetition of the arguments of the small business lobby (using their own campaigning pamphlets!) that is even more partial than my own account would be and Paddison's (2000) attempt at an impartial assessment, concluding that charity shops complement rather than compete with other local retailers.

Finally, we turn to academic studies of charity shops. Interestingly, given the lack of geographical studies of the voluntary sector more generally (see 2.4.6 below), geographers are quite prominent in academic studies of charity shops. In addition to my own articles (Goodall 2000c, 2001d) and papers (1999, 2000d, 2000e) drawing on the research for this thesis, there are the articles of Parsons (2000, 2002) researching the profile of charity shoppers in Bristol and the meanings of charity shops for volunteers, and Gregson *et al* (2000, 2002) who analyse how shoppers and staff relate to the bodily nature of charity shop clothing and how discourses of charity shop professionalisation are played out in the context of actual shops.

From marketing, Home and Broadbridge offered five papers in the mid-1990s (Home and Broadbridge 1993, 1994, 1995, Broadbridge and Home 1993, 1994, Home 2000) examining the profile of charity shop volunteers, attempting to classify charity shops based on the proportion of bought-in new goods they sell, and portraying the sector as moving from immaturity to maturity through a so-called 'Wheel of Retailing' model.

From sociology, Chattoe (2000) studied charity shops as second-hand markets, essentially offering a challenge to traditional models of consumption. Usefully, he argues that charity shop professionalisation may be counter-productive, particularly if the 'special' qualities of charity shops are expunged (the informal, helpful and unpressured sales staff, the variety of goods, the potential for finding a bargain, and the maintenance of an interesting environment for volunteers). Finally, Whithear (1999) and Maddrell (2000) both look at volunteers, the first arguing that they should not be taken for granted and the second examining ways in which

charity shops have increased their volunteer numbers by taking on non-conventional volunteers, including those who are not strictly volunteers at all (probationers and licensed prisoners completing Community Service hours).

The best of this work links the socio-cultural with the economic. It is at this point that studies of charity shops relate back to the distinction that is commonly made between consumption and production.

2.2.4 Beyond Production and Consumption

Some studies of private sector shops have bridged the consumption-production (or shopping-retailing) divide. This has taken three distinct forms. Before introducing these, however, it is necessary to note that two different senses of 'production' are used in the literature. Unfortunately they tend to be conflated with one another, or at least not distinguished carefully enough. The first is production as the realm and activity of private sector organisations (i.e. one half of the traditional production-consumption split). The second is production as the generation of socio-cultural life (i.e. the practices of humans as 'productive' agents).

The first of the three attempts to bridge the production-consumption divide examines producers (manufacturers and retailers) who consciously address consumption processes, and indeed attempt to significantly intervene in consumption processes by 'constructing' consumers. The focus is often advertising, marketing and similar customer-focused activities of producers (Whitwell 1989, Morean 1996, Ohmann 1996, Lien 1997, 2000, Mort 2000). Producers are seen attempting to determine the consumption process. We might characterise this as *the consumption-awareness of the production realm*.

Second, consumption can be compared with reading a text, particularly but not exclusively where television, magazines and books are the 'products' being consumed. Research into the enculturing of material objects (Miller 1987, 1998, Stevenson et al 2000) has drawn from theories of reading 'texts' (Morley 1992, Ang 1996) in which reading (or consuming) is seen as productive work in and of itself. The agency of the reader is stressed and reading is seen as an essentially free activity in which a text can be interpreted in many ways, determined by the reader. Similarly, an object or product can be consumed in many ways once purchased, making consumption itself a productive activity. This is not to say that the reader-consumer always successfully resists the readings intended by the author-producer. As Jackson argues, "an emphasis on the active construction of meaning by ordinary consumers risks romanticising their agency, exaggerating the scope for oppositional readings of various kinds ... active should not be equated with powerful" (2000: 147). Nevertheless, consumption is viewed as a productive act, potentially counteracting the attempts by the producers to determine consumption practices. We might characterise this as *the productive process of consumption*.

These first two ways of combining production and consumption therefore suggest a struggle between 'producers' and 'consumers' over who determines the consumer's construction of products. But both senses of production are being used – the producers are called producers because they create the product and also try to produce the consumption process, whereas the consumer is called a producer because of the productive practices (human agency) of their consumption process. Neither approach successfully dissolves the production-consumption binary. They both posit production and consumption as two separate realms and types of activity.

This should not be seen as a wholesale critique of these two sets of literatures, for they often do not claim to be concerned with going beyond the production-consumption distinction. Nevertheless if we are concerned about moving beyond that binary (and I believe we should be) neither literature offers ready-made solutions. Some of this research explicitly aims to bridge the consumption-production divide, forcing us to address its failure to do so. For example, Jackson *et al* introduce a recent edited volume by claiming that it "transcends conventional dualisms, bringing together 'the cultural' and 'the economic', for example by exploring the links between production and consumption" (2000: 1). Despite this, most chapters in the book (Winship 2000, Mort 2000a, 2000b, Miller 2000, Jackson 2000, Lien 2000, Stallard 2000, Stevenson *et al* 2000, Wrigley 2000, Lowe 2000a, 2000b and Moore 2000) focus on either production or consumption activities. They therefore do not appear to disturb the foundations of the production-consumption binary: the belief that there is an inherent difference between producing and consuming activities.

The papers in that volume that do question this belief (Clarke 2000, Gregson *et al* 2000, Slater 2000) are therefore instructive and lead to the third method of bridging the consumption-production divide. This involves focusing on the similarities rather than the differences between activities of producing and consuming. These chapters each suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that processes of production and processes of consumption draw upon similar or even identical human processes. Clarke's 'mother swappers' demonstrate the importance to both consumers and producers of the human search for identification. Whether buyers, sellers or both, they are intent on displaying the identity of 'expert mother'. Gregson *et al* argue that the 'body' is an important discourse in second-hand adult clothing for both charity shop volunteers (producers) and customers (consumers). They highlight processes of taking particular stances towards objects and inscribing them with meanings, again regardless of whether one is a consumer or a producer. Slater's argument that sociality (friendship, authentic relations, closeness, order, moral norms) is created in an apparently asocial, virtual world, and that conventional economic relations and conditions (trade, reciprocity, scarcity, value) are created in an apparently non-economic world where things have no price, cost, or material value serves to demonstrate the human need for order. His focus on 'traders' inherently undermines any distinction between 'producers' and 'consumers'.

These cases identify aspects of human activity that, though contextually specific, are not necessarily bifurcated across the production-consumer border. Each shows that the production-consumption binary is quite arbitrary and not necessarily a useful division of human activity. We might characterise this third way of bridging the production-consumption divide as *the socio-cultural production of production-consumption*.

My own position is that the binary is an invented one that may be useful for some purposes but has little ontological basis. I believe that for the most part the basic human practices that occur during a so-called 'production' activity and in a so-called 'production' environment – identity assertion and formation; a desire to perform in an accountable way; the creation of meaning; the pre- and post-hoc relationship between doing and being; the reception, production and corruption of discourse; verbal and non-verbal communication; the reinscription of power relations – are identical to the human activities that occur in a so-called 'consumption' activity and in a so-called 'consumption' environment. At the same time I accept that instead of looking for the similarities between production and consumption activity, we could look for the differences. Researchers interested in the latter are likely to stress the importance of the categorisation and point to the differences between human activities in the head office of a global corporation and a sweatshop. Researchers interested in the former are likely to question the binary's usefulness and point to those activities that are found in both these contexts. Both positions are valid and either could be chosen, depending upon the nature of the particular study and the particular researcher.

This particular study takes the view that, theoretically, identification processes are equally relevant in production and consumption environments and that it adds little to a study of charity shop organisations and their Heads to refer to it as 'production'. Yet I do believe that the material 'outcomes' of production are important and that the study of firms and other organisations is essential because they are crucial to the generation of social life. My position is close to Schoenberger when she stresses that "we can't learn everything we need to know about what drives change in the production system by looking only at production" (1997: 12).

Clarke, Gregson *et al* and Slater successfully bridge the consumption-production divide because they are open to the similarities between human practices within the realms of production and consumption. In this they follow some important texts (Law 1994, Casey 1995, du Gay 1996a, 1996b, and McDowell 1996) that have undertaken a similar task and that will be examined later. The thesis works with this nascent tradition. To best explain how I perceive this approach and its usefulness, it is necessary to consider the relationship between economy and culture.

2.2.5 Economy and Culture

Attempts to bridge the production-consumption binary are indicative of broader debates about the economy-culture binary. As a discipline, geography has contributed significantly to these debates. It must be stressed that the economy-culture binary works in two very different ways, first as a debate over *which social realm* should be researched ('the economy of ...' or 'the culture of ...'), and second as a debate over *how* society should be analysed ('economically' or 'culturally'). Of course, identifying 'the economy' as a realm already suggests a desire to analyse society 'economically', but the identification of subject areas is not reducible to the selection of analytical approach. These two senses of economy-culture are mapped onto production-consumption in various combinations and these can be related to broad movements in the history of human geography. Presented below is a very simplified, rhetorical and pedagogical version of that history, which is therefore sweeping and general but nonetheless useful in drawing out different approaches.

First, under the older tradition of economic geography, production-consumption was seen as a good way to categorise economic activity. Culture was unimportant, at best only an epiphenomenon upon an economic base (under Marxist approaches) or a strangely independent variable that could be used to explain anything that size, structure, formality, and environment could not (under positivist approaches). One could study the 'production' realm as most did, or the 'consumption' realm. This categorisation reflected the division between supply and demand, considered crucial to economic analysis. This is *economic analysis of the economic realm*.

Second, this tradition was developed as a result of calls for a more culturally aware economic geography. A new strand of research saw consumption and 'value' as a socially constructed process related to objectification and personal and group (especially race, class, and gender) identities, rather than characterised by perfect rationalism. This was made possible by feminist interventions and by Miller's development of anthropological theories of gift and exchange (Miller 1987). Earlier I referred to this as research into *the productive process of consumption*. Stevenson *et al's* (2000) analysis of the diverse readings of men's lifestyle magazines fits neatly within this category. This is *socio-cultural-economic analysis of one sphere of the economic realm – consumption*.

Third, the focus on the social and cultural nature of consumers led researchers to ask whether producers also construct their products socially and culturally, with their consumers in mind. This led to a broadening of traditional studies of 'production' to include activities like advertising, marketing, and merchandising. Earlier I referred to this as research into *the consumption-awareness of the production realm* and texts often examine the enculturing of products such as 'Italian' Norwegian pizzas (Lien 2000), own-brand chain store goods (Winship 2000), and books and reading (Stallard 2000). In addition, social and cultural studies of work were developed,

such as Casey (1995) and Knights and Willmott (1999). This is *socio-cultural-economic analysis of the other sphere of the economic realm – production*.

Up to this point, producers and consumers (workers and shoppers) were still separated. The fourth historical move saw the dissolution of the production-consumption binary so that both spheres of the economy were seen to operate through similar socio-cultural processes, constituted through a circuit of flows of products and ideas and images. Earlier I referred to this as research into *the socio-cultural production of production-consumption* and we could easily substitute the phrase 'production-consumption' with the phrase 'the economy'. For this research is essentially socio-cultural analysis of economic aspects of social life. It is represented by the three texts already identified (Gregson *et al* 2000, Clarke 2000, Slater 2000) and also by du Gay (1996a, 1996b). This is *socio-cultural-economic analysis of the entire economic realm*, not just production or consumption.

Finally, a fifth historical move has taken place. This involves demoting 'economy' even further and dissolving the boundary between the so-called economic and cultural realms. This approach sees all spaces as simultaneously constituted by (at least) economic, social, cultural, and political processes. It believes that studies within 'economic' organisations need not engage in economic analysis, for organisations are much more than economic entities. This is *socio-cultural-politico-economic analysis of a socio-cultural-politico-economic environment*. The clumsiness of this compound term indicates that these studies take *no particular approach* to the 'analysis of social life' prior to empirical analysis. In other words, cultural, political, economic and social are seen as terms that actors in a research setting may call upon, but not as useful ways of categorising the world or our analysis of it.

This thesis sits within this fifth type of study. It is an assessment of identity processes and discursive practices within a self-defined 'economic sector'. In this sense it is much like Law (1994), McDowell (1997), and Nixon (2000), discussed along with Casey (1995) and du Gay (1996b) below (2.4.4). But demoting the importance of our disciplinary categories must not blind us to the material outcomes of the flow of difficult to categorise human activity that we observe. The money raised by charity shops has significant social, economic and political effects, notwithstanding the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of the actual shops and their processes. The 'economic' may not be a term we wish to apply to the human behaviour in our study, but certain outcomes of human behaviour are about the redistribution of human resources, for which the term 'economic' is a pretty useful signifier. This thesis is therefore a study of humans doing things but with measurable material outcomes. Whilst it is unhelpful to refer to their actions as economic, it is appropriate to categorise some of the outcomes of their actions in this way.

In discussing the relationship between the cultural and the economic in geography, Crang (1997) offers some further points worth mentioning here. First is the question of a definition of

culture. One can write forever on this so I have chosen to be very brief and simply identify my favoured position, which follows Crang's preferred use of culture (1997: 5, my emphasis):

as a 'generic' facet of human life, bound up with human competencies to make the world meaningful and significant. Here, then, the cultural turn involves economic geographers taking seriously questions of meaning and value ... [C]ulture is cast less as a thing which all human beings possess than as a process that we are all involved in. The cultural, then, concerns the meaningful mapping of the world and one's positionings within it. It concerns practices of identity, meaning and signification.

Culture is neither a thing nor an explanation for processes, but as a way of understanding all social processes. Crang (ibid) approvingly cites Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 79):

"not only is culture a process and not a thing but ... it is a process which is often treated as if it were a thing" ... Hence it is precisely this construction of cultural things which needs explaining. Cultures are the starting point of analytical endeavour, not the end point. In and of themselves they explain nothing.

As Gertler notes (1997: 48):

When economic analysts resort to 'cultural' influences to explain the behaviour of managers, firms and workers, this is normally tantamount to an admission of ignorance. It is as if the processes at work arise from some timeless, primordial traits whose formation mystifies and confounds understanding.

Crang (1997) also discusses 'the cultural turn' in economic geography (see also Crang 2000). I find it useful to think of this using three different versions of the word 'turn':

1. 'We turned around' – as a variety of cornerings and turnings, such as a wholesale 180°, an educational 360°, a mild 20°, or a breakneck 90°.
2. 'I'm afraid he's had a bit of a turn' – as a strange, odd or funny moment in your head that thankfully passes as you return back to normal.
3. 'Now it's my turn!' – as a go on a fairground ride, or one's chance to put one's case, before you yourself must make way for another to do the same in an endless game of turn-taking.

These three types of 'turn' offer three different characterisations of the cultural transformation of economic geography:

1. A semi-permanent realignment in the sub-discipline's direction, until the next major turn,
2. A momentary lapse that will pass and return us to before, or
3. A wholesale change like the March of Paradigms that itself will eventually be completely replaced.

I make these points in order to add more vocabulary to discussion over the future direction of cultural-economic geography and also to indicate the limits as well as the possibilities of characterising the enculturing of economic geography as a turn. Talk of 'turns' tends to portray economic geography as a unidirectional sub-discipline, underplaying its multi-directionality. Better, I suggest, to talk of a recent 'cultural building' within the townscape of economic geography; the introduction of different cultural architectures that have extended economic geography's scope but where not all its townspeople need live.

A further point to take from Crang is his discussion of the appropriate scale of analysis. A culturally enlivened economic geography needs to operate at all scales from the individual to the global, he argues. The relations between the individual and the firm must be explicated, "not by appealing rather blandly to some organic organisational culture of shared values and norms, but more particularly through a focus on how firms are able to establish a particular way of doing things – a particular economic rationality – through the way they make up *organisational identities*" (Crang 1997: 11, my emphasis). I will address the issue of organisational identities in section 2.4.4 below but it is worth stressing that identity is seen as a key issue within a discussion of economic and cultural geography. He continues:

Just how these differently scaled contextualisations interact is of course the really fascinating agenda. [For example], how do individuals and companies negotiate constructions of *organisational identity* with more generally apparent norms, and abnorms, of *individual identity* practice (ibid, my emphasis).

The interactions and mutual contextualisation of different 'scales' is one of the key contributions of the thesis, particularly with respect to 'identities'.

Neither is Crang the only contemporary geographer for whom 'identity' emerges as a key issue when discussing cultural and economic geography. For Peet (1997: 46, added emphasis):

[M]uch of contemporary social theory can be employed in conceptualising the mediations between nature and economy on the one hand, and between power and meaning on the other, the general term for the complex of such mediations being culture. That is, economic motives and logics, consumer preferences and worker attitudes, are not created by economy alone, but instead derive from the *identities* of agents and the discursive formations and social and environmental imaginaries of their culture and time. This emphasis on the socialised and encultured economic agent involves, most centrally, notions of subjectivity, rationality, imagination, and *identity* ... [I]dentity is constituted relationally through involvement with significant others, through integration into communities, so that group categorisations and norms are major constituents of individual *identity*, the connections being to social relations, institutions and power.

Thus an examination of literature surrounding 'shops' has taken us from the retailing-shopping dichotomy, through the production-consumption binary, into the economy-culture binary, and beyond into the importance of identity, examined in the next section.

2.3 Studying Identity

2.3.1 The Identity Concept

The concept of identity is seemingly inescapable in contemporary social science and is one of those concepts you feel is more than an academic fad. Indeed as Jenkins points out (1996: 7-10), its elevation to a 'key concept' within sociology, as evidenced by its place in The Open University influential 'Key Ideas' series, should be seen as the culmination of a long heritage including not only Mead and Goffman but also the seventeenth century Locke and even the fifth century Saint Augustine. It is not a new concept.

It is, however, an extremely complex concept, partly because of this long history and partly because it has been claimed by a host of social science disciplines. For psychologists, identity is often a term denoting an immutable and pre-social 'I', and they may sometimes blame sociologists for ignoring or even corrupting this (Craib 1998). For cultural theorists, it is often about symbols, belonging, discourse, similarity and difference (Woodward 1997, Hall 1996). For feminists it is often the process through which embodied performance is marked within power relations (Butler 1999) as well as a focus for resistant gender politics (Bhabba 1994). For some sociologists, identities are now crisis-ridden in the face of massive socio-economic change (Giddens 1991, 1992, Jameson 1991, Lash and Friedman 1992, Friedman 1994) or have at least always been a problem but only recently seen as such (Bauman 1996). For other sociologists, it is the concept that ties together the individual and the collective (Jenkins 1996). For yet others it is the site of resistance or creativity (Hetherington 1998). For anthropologists it is often the basis for cultural categories (Wright 1994, Strathern 1997). Finally for those with geographical imaginations, identity can be spatialised (Hinchcliffe 1997), implicated with places (Keith and Pile 1993, Crang 1996, Hetherington 1997), or viewed as a characteristic of places (Augé 1995, Soja 1996).

A synthesis or even summary of all these approaches is impossible here. I offer a slant through two crucial debates about identity: the issue of 'self' (2.3.2), and the issue of *interpellation* (2.3.3). For the sake of clarity, each sub-section summarises two or three distinct positions from the literature, plus my own stance.

Before beginning, however, it may be helpful to clarify the overall argument and main purpose of each sub-section, particularly their import for the study of charity shop Heads. An assumed understanding of 'self' (2.3.2) is found in all writings about identity, whether it is made explicit or not. Through a critical account of notions of self, this sub-section offers a five-fold classification of self-hood. These are not five categories, but five markers along a scale of awareness. The development of this vocabulary substantially aids the discussion of identity processes amongst

charity shop Heads. For example, the third marker can be seen as relevant to Heads' senses of what *type* of person (and what type of manager, retailer, Head) they are. The fifth marker relates to very reflexive assertions of self, the *desire* of Heads to be something in particular, rather than just their *sense* of their particular nature.

Sub-section 2.3.3 examines notions of interpellation, the process by which people are said to 'take up' identities. It stresses the importance of differentiating between processes of classification ('identifying something as a thing'), characterisation ('referring to that thing using one key characteristic'), and identification ('identifying *with* a thing'). All of these approaches are *productive* processes but, I argue, there has been an imbalance in studies of identity in favour of a more structuralist 'reception' of identity discourses. Whilst these are useful in explaining the persistence and widespread nature of identities such as gender, they underplay the generation of new classifications, characterisations and identifications. This is particularly important in a study of charity shop Heads because identifications with 'retailing', 'voluntarism', 'the sector', 'charity' or 'professionalism' are very much constructed identifications based on restructured classifications. Because we are looking at *organising identities* rather than identities like gender, age, sexuality and so on, it is essential that we are alert to the *productive* and *contingent* nature of these identities.

2.3.2 Being Your Self

All theories of identity draw on implicit or explicit understandings of 'the self', our mental constitution of our embodied individuality. This sub-section compares two approaches to this important ontological question. One view, represented by Craib (1998), posits that there is a part of each of us that is a pure and unsullied self beyond the reaches of "the social" and that acts as a stable base from which to define our "social identity". The other view, represented by Hall (1996), Woodward (1997) and Jenkins (1996), argues that there is no immutable self, that all our self is social. Both these positions on the self are, of course, social constructions themselves, but the first involves a claim that an inner self is not socially constructed, while the second involves a claim that every aspect of self is socially constructed. Notions related to this debate will be important in ~ *Part Two ~ Analysis: Charity Shops and Identity* when we come to assess the nature of Heads' organising identities.

I begin by comparing Hall with Craib. Hall generally approves of the post-structural, postmodern and feminist deconstructions of the identity concept. He notes that such texts have been "critical of the notion of an integral, originary and unified identity" (Hall 1996: 1) and have brought to an end the notion of the unmediated and transparent subject (or identity) as the centred author of social practice. According to Hall, rather than a theory of the knowing subject, we need a theory of discursive practice. Rather than viewing identity as essentialist, we should focus on a strategic and positional use of identity (ibid: 3):

Identities are never unified ... never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions ... [I]dentities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, ... produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices ... The unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure (ibid: 4-5).

In other words, there is no immutable self, only an ever-changing (or at least ever-open-to-change) self produced in a dynamic discursive context, relative to always moving 'others' that are excluded to give the impression of inner unity.

Craib argues strongly against this. For him, arguments about the relationality of identities in the mutual construction of 'self' and 'other' depend upon reading life as though it was language, which is fine as analogy but not as a real description (1998: 80). He sees the notion that identity is constructed "through various disciplines and discourses" as "depressive" (ibid: 7). He offers a scathing critique of Hall's view that identities are constructed cognitively, within discourse, and through difference. He also accuses Hall of reifying 'discourse' and 'practice' by using these terms in the same way that traditional, deterministic sociologies used notions of 'role' and 'role expectations' (1998: 8). Finally, he stresses that a major problem of Hall's thesis is his reliance on Althusser's notion of *interpellation* or 'hailing', in which people are recruited to particular discourses (that hold codes about categories of self and other) and adopt identities based on discursive codes. Craib argues that this hailing or interpellation is nonsensical as a description of identity formation because there must be an extant subject to hear the hailing and to adopt the discourse. In other words, identity exists before its own supposed formation and "we cannot escape the 'I'" (ibid: 8). In summary Craib complains that "sociological approaches to identity or the self tend to assume that the world is peopled by normotic personalities, by people who have no subjective or inner experience" (Craib: 9).

Against this (in Craib's view) depressive focus on reified discourses deterministically creating subjects, he posits a focus on the "inner space" from which we experience the world, on life as it is experienced in all its emotional and unconscious (as well as cognitive) reality, and on the part of ourselves that existed prior to identity formation. Experience is far broader than just identity, he feels, and privileging identity simply closes down possibilities and understandings (Craib: 10-11). The self, he argues, is the person, and that person would exist and experience and perceive the world even without any 'other'. There *is* an immutable self. Sociologists such as Hall imply this without realising it in their talk of a subject hailed by discourse, for who *hears* and *answers* the hailing but the immutable self?

Can we square these apparently diametrically opposed assertions? Yes, we can. To demonstrate how this is possible, we need to ask: Can a person have a 'sense of self' even if there is no 'sense of other'? To this I answer 'no'. Even if you were the only human on the planet and had never heard of the category 'human', surely you would still counterpose yourself to the things you are not: animal, plant, rock, air, water, sun, food. To 'exist and perceive' would

therefore involve distinguishing yourself from other things around you. Craib would retort that by talking of 'you' already presupposes a self or identity to do the asking. And at this point we can begin to resolve the apparent difference of opinion. Few people, certainly not Hall, would argue against the notion that there is something within us that feels and experiences – a collection of cells, sensory perceptions, instinctive behaviours and a brain with certain potential. Whilst some social theorists may underprivilege this inner self, few would deny its existence altogether. The twin issues then become whether we should call this inner self that is present from the moment of our first experiences (before birth) an 'identity', and whether we should see the existence of a pre-social self as the same as the existence of a *sense* of that self. For Craib, the existence of feelings and experience is enough to refer to 'identity', and the existence of an inner self is synonymous with having a sense of self. For Hall (and me), however, identity means something stronger than this. A *sense* of self is not the same as the existence of a feeling, experiencing life-form. So we have a definitional misunderstanding, Craib using 'identity' and 'sense of self' in areas where Hall does not.

How does this relate back to Craib's disagreements with Hall about the necessary existence of an 'other'? The very act of identifying oneself as an individual, as a thing, is about bounding oneself, about (a) perceiving that there are such things as 'things' in world, and (b) perceiving yourself as one of these things or units. This very act of bounding must always create an outside as well as an inside. But this process does not rely on linguistic or discursive theory – it can be pre-linguistic. We exist before language and can have a sense that we exist, can feel that we are alive, before language. And we can feel that we are a bounded thing distinct from other things before we have language – the child learns it is separate from its mother long before it develops language.

We have now distinguished 'feeling and experiencing' from 'feeling that you are a bounded thing distinct from other things'. We have argued that feeling and experiencing (being a 'self') is not the same as having a *sense* of self. But we have yet to address whether 'feeling you are a bounded thing distinct from other things' is strong enough to equate with Hall's 'sense of self'? In other words, is feeling and acting as though you are an entity distinct from all others (or being a self that is not others) the same as *knowing that you are a self* (or having a *sense* of that self)? We are now beyond the disagreement between Hall and Craib and into debates about cognition. Does a 'sense of self', as used by Hall, require a cognitive and conscious appreciation that you are a cognitive, conscious thing, or can the phrase 'sense of self' be applied more minimally to the feeling that you are a separate thing (a feeling my cats probably have)? In an attempt to answer these questions, we can posit at least five different degrees of awareness, in ascending order:

1. A sense that we exist (we experience, feel and perceive the world).
2. A sense that we are a thing distinct from the other things that we experience (the internal/external boundary is created and we *feel* we are a distinct entity).

3. A sense of our particularity (we *learn and know* that we are not just a thing amongst other things but a *particular* type of thing – a human, a clever boy, a beautiful girl, a rich man, a strong woman – compared with the other particular things we are not and with characteristics we do not have).
4. A sense of our self (we *learn and know* we are a relatively stable, living and distinct entity with the capacity for memory, cognition and self-control).
5. A sense that we can shape our particular self (we *believe* that we can/will be something other than we are at present – that I will grow up to be a daddy and a husband; that he can 'be who he wants to be'; that if you *really feel* you are a woman even though you seem to be a man, you might be able to change your body to match your feelings).

We might see the first level as a property of most animals (even slugs), level two as a property of some animals (my cats), levels three and four associated with human childhood linguistic development (and perhaps other animals), and level five as associated with an idea often taken on during adolescence or adulthood (and perhaps learnt by more people under conditions of 'late modernity') but sometimes not taken on at all. Whilst we are on the subject of animals, it is worth noting that studies of ants and bees in their social role-based colonies and hives offer potentially huge insight into the generation of wholly social selves and senses of boundedness – do individual ants see themselves as bounded from all other ants, or as one colony bounded from other colonies and the rest of the world? The term 'identity' should probably be related only to levels two to five, because there is a sense of other at these levels, but not at level one.

These five suggested levels have developed through a sustained engagement with questions of identity and self and are offered as suggestions to help our discussion. Whilst I claim no ontological status for them and would not portray them as five distinct categories, they might usefully be seen as significant 'markers of change' on a sliding scale of awareness. They are certainly useful for mapping the diversity of positions on 'identity'.

We can see, for example, that Craib talks mainly about the first level and argues that this remains important throughout adult life, a point it seems prudent to accept. Hall, however, talks mainly at levels three and five, mediated by level four, hence Craib's criticism that much of daily experience is displaced through a focus on only the cognitive aspects of self. Mead's (1934: 174-7) distinction between 'I' and 'me' seems to mirror levels one and four respectively, for the 'I' is the acting self which we can never turn round quickly enough to see, and the 'me' is the 'I' that you remember you were ten minutes ago and the internalised voice of others. Similarly Ryle's classic study of 'mind' (1963: 178) sees the self as "systematically elusive" because, although you can explain yesterday's self, the self of now can never be pinpointed – this again mirrors levels one and four, the cognitive boundary. Descartes' famous axiom 'I think, therefore I am' is as neat an exposition of level four as we could wish for. The often essentialised identities of gender and race sit at level three, to be resisted by the 'identity politics' bursting from level four into level five.

Contemporary identity-crisis theories (Giddens 1991, Jameson 1991, Friedman 1994) tend to be based on instability from levels three to five, with the taken-for-granted essentialisms of level three and the assumed stability of level four said to be thrown into disarray by the reflexivity inherent in level five. Cultural studies (Hall 1996, Woodward 1997) view level three as the site of continual discursive practice, such that our *particular* self draws upon discourses of sameness and difference, self and other, that are normatively constituted (e.g. 'women good, men bad').

Viewing levels two to five as the realm of 'identity' has some resonance with Jenkins' persuasive understanding of social identity.

If identity is a necessary prerequisite for social life, the reverse is also true. Individual identity – embodied in selfhood – is not meaningful in isolation from the social world of other people. Individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly socially constructed ... [A]n understanding emerges of the 'self' as an ongoing and, in practice simultaneous, synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others ... In other words, we cannot see ourselves at all without seeing ourselves as other people see us (1996: 21).

Jenkins views individual identity and social identity as co-emergent, insisting on the always-social nature of identity. In stating that "social identity is never unilateral" (1996: 21) he roundly rejects the immutability position of Craib, as Craib (1998: 4) similarly and explicitly rejects the approach of Jenkins. The difference between them rests on Craib's insistence that the term 'identity' should include perception and experience (and apply to the first of the five levels identified above), and Jenkins insistence that it should only include aspects of self that are defined socially, in relation to others (levels two to five). Craib talks of existence and the self. Jenkins appreciates that a *sense* of self is more than just existence.

Most approaches to self and identity talk across each other, apparently without understanding why. Perhaps many theorists who reject the views of others are missing the idea that diverse understandings of 'self' represent more than just differences of opinion. To feel, to feel you are a thing, to feel you are a particular sort of thing, to know you can think, and to try to be what you want to be, are all very different levels of awareness but, I argue, are chronically conflated in debates over self and identity. This offers a conceptual framework for ~ *Part Two ~ Analysis*, where the third and fifth levels will become particularly important.

2.3.3 Demoting Interpellation

Woodward rightly stresses that identity is fundamentally about classifying:

[I]dentity is relational, and difference is established by symbolic marking in relation to others ... Social differentiation is how these classifications of difference are 'lived out' in social relations. The conceptualisation of identity involves looking at classificatory systems which show how social relations are organised and divided (1997: 11-12).

Whilst sometimes our classifications appear to point to essential differences between people (and things), these essentialist claims are usually based on versions of history that underplay difference (ibid). The notion that identity is closely related to classificatory systems is important, for it points to the fact that identity begins as a process of, literally, identifying 'things'. This is different to identifying *with* things, as we will explore shortly. Using Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (1966), Woodward notes that "the marking of difference is thus the key component in any system of classification" and that "culture, in the form of ritual, symbol and classification, is central to the production of meaning and the reproduction of social relations" (Woodward 1997: 30-1). With Douglas, Woodward argues that a culture of shared meanings exists when there is a degree of consensus amongst members of a group about how to classify things. This culture, though socially produced, is quite fixed in many of its basics terms and acts as a resource that people rarely transgress. Order is produced through classification:

[I]deas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, for and against that a semblance of order is created" (Douglas 1966, cited in Woodward 1997: 32).

Thus identity is no longer seen simply as a matter of who we are and, perhaps, who we would like to be, but a fundamental aspect of social order. Social order and social control, or "socio-technical orderings" (Law 1994: *passim*), are produced by this demarcating and classifying. "One identity is created in relation to another" (Woodward 1997: 33). Further, with reference to Derrida, Woodward notes that our classifications are rarely binaries in which each side has equal weight. Instead they are usually unbalanced couplings, such that man is deemed better than women, young better than old, white better than black (ibid: 35-6). Through classification, therefore, power is both produced and maintained. "The struggle to assert different identities has material causes and consequences" which highlights the importance of reproducing history as a means to stress current identity (Woodward 1997: 9-10).

Although I am uncomfortable with Woodward's rather atomistic and undifferentiated understanding of culture as 'a shared thing' that produces order (is disorder not also cultural?) and would question any attempt to delineate 'cultures' based on the mapping of shared classifications systems (if every human used the man-woman classifier would we live in a single global culture?), I fully accept the argument that identity is a process of classification based on material, symbolic and social practices and implicated in power relations.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency in cultural studies of identity to focus on the ex-essential identities (gender, race, class) and the process by which these are taken up or rejected by people. This focus on the adoption of *existing* categories underplays the important of the *generation* of classifications. Woodward follows Althusser in positing 'discourses' as the containers of identity codes, and subjects as being 'hailed' by these discourses and taking up (or not) the identity codes that are offered:

We still have to explain why people take up their positions and identify with them. Why do people invest in the positions which discourses of identity offer?

...

Discourses, whatever sets of meaning they construct, can only be effective if they recruit subjects. Subjects are thus subjected to the discourse and must themselves take it up as individuals who so position themselves. The positions which we take up and identify with constitute our identities

...

Interpellation is the term used by Louis Althusser to explain the way in which subjects are recruited into subject-positions through recognising themselves – ‘yes that’s me’. This process takes place at the level of the unconscious and is one way of describing how individuals come to adopt particular subject-positions (Woodward 1997: 12, 39, 42).

This notion that people “take up their positions” within identity discourses that are offered to them is very common in the identity literature (Hall 1996, Grossberg 1996, Watson 1997) but is questionable. It tips the balance towards structures and away from agents. It portrays identities as a child’s paint set where the only question is which of the limited colours you will choose to paint with. Like colours, some identities can dominate others, so that gender can be all encompassing and overcome your class and sexuality. Conversely, people can mix colours to create new ones. The trouble with the idea, though, is that they can only mix with what they are given in the first place. While I fully accept that there are some big primary colours that everyone is introduced to early in life and so appear on most peoples’ palette, I would argue that each of us is also able to make up brand new colours, imagine new identities, new ways of classifying ourselves and others, or at least new variants on old themes. In the end, I feel, the study of identity is (or should be) the study of the miraculous human ability to make difference out of almost anything, and children do this very early. It is important to understand the millions of minute classifications of people and things, the construction of thousands of mini-binaries, the simple game of ‘higher or lower’ that is played against any number of others and over any number of characteristics. ‘Am I happier than him? shorter than her? less boring than them?’ ‘Can I drink more than him? show I know more than her? be more emotional than I am now?’

Jenkins (1996: 21) discusses childhood socialisation and the importance of the primary identities such as gender and human-ness. These map well onto levels two and three of my scale of self-hood. The notion that these primary identities are given to us very early in life, and therefore feel ‘essential’, makes more sense than the notion of being hailed by a discourse and thinking ‘that’s me’. Yet Jenkins stress on childhood socialisation again reinforces the notion that the identities we should discuss are those that seem “deeper than us” (ibid: 28) or, in Woodward’s terms “bigger than us” (1997: 40).

Both these notions underplay the degree to which identities are also generated. This is not to say that primary socialisation or powerful ‘external’ discourses are unimportant. But it is to argue that identities are not limited to this. We can give an identity to everything, and researching the subtle process of *classification*, the way we skilfully combine objects, characteristics, similarity and difference, is a key project for the social scientist. Identity can be seen as the attempt to ‘fix’ a characteristic onto an object in order to usefully identify that object.

To say 'this chest of drawers is white' should not, in my opinion, be seen as identity statement, but as a descriptive, *classification* statement. To ask, however, 'Where shall we put the white chest of drawers?' is to express its identity to someone else who knows the chest of drawers you mean when you say this. In other words, this chest of drawers is not just described as white – it can be *identified because* it is white. Its whiteness is more than a descriptive fact, it has become a marker of difference, and an identifier. Presumably no other chests of drawers in the flat are white, or white enough, to confuse them with this chest of drawers. In other words, identity terms are strongly indexical (Garfinkel 1967). But we know that misunderstandings occur, especially when each of us identifies the same thing differently. 'Do you mean the one in the hall?' I reply. 'No! That's the cream one!' she exclaims, exasperated that her identification process has not been useful, that her ascription of identity failed, because of my 'blindness to colour'. From now, when she says 'the white one' I'll know she means 'the one in the bedroom' not the one in the hall; and I'll know I can say 'the cream one' instead of 'the one in the hall', now I've noticed its non-whiteness, or at least accepted that we will be identifying it as cream, whatever colour it 'actually' is. We have agreed how to identify our furniture, have ascribed identities to chests of drawers, in order that we can distinguish between them.

I suggest that the identification of singular, characteristics that 'stand for' objects (or people) and identify them uniquely should be termed *characterisation*. We should also distinguish between this and *classification* – the process of identifying something as a thing – and *identification* – the process of identifying *with* something. These relate to the five levels of self-awareness introduced above. Identifying some thing as distinct from other things – *classification* – is akin to level two, though about something else rather than one's self. Identifying a characteristic to 'stand for' a thing – *characterisation* – is akin to level three, though again about something else rather than one's self. Identifying *with* something – *identification* – does not fit neatly onto the 'levels' schema, though it clearly relates in some way to levels three or five. Identifying *with* something is about associating oneself with an other thing or person and is clearly about distinguishing yourself in some way, but this could be at various degrees of self-awareness.

Childhood socialisation is an essential process of identity formation, for we learn that we are human and male or female very early, before even our language and cognition develop. Language itself operates mainly as a huge classifying system and as we learn a language we learn to classify the world in certain ways. No wonder our identities feel essential, for there is very little of our essence prior to the formation of our primary identifications (Jenkins 1996: 21). Yet as well as these deep ways of classifying ourselves and our world we need to think about the 'lighter' ways in which we creatively produce endless comparisons, classifications, characterisations and identifications. Identities are shorthand for 'narratives about ourselves' and self-identity is partly a *productive and contingent* work.

Some of our experiences of identity, like life, feel as though they come from our own creativity. Some of our experiences of the essences of gender and human-ness posit us as subject to

structures beyond our control. Rather than focus on just the latter, as some cultural studies do, we need to study both.

My approach to identity is strongly non-essentialist and stresses the momentary nature of identities, while at the same time stressing the operation of what we might call a 'will to fixity', a desire that people have (and this desire might well be historically and geographically contingent) to see themselves (and to appear to others) as though they were fixed and stable from one situation to another. When Garfinkel (1967) talks of the importance of appearing accountable, this is usually in single, bounded situations and interactions. I would like to suggest that the ethnomethod of accountability also operates across situations, from one interaction to another. And above this, there is a desire for stability, to avoid contradictions, a desire to have one set of stable, self-identity-related resources that apply in all the situations we enter. The fact that this is unlikely ever to be achieved is perhaps hidden from us by our overwhelming desire for its existence. We want, so much, to be stable or at least to be seen to be stable (and this distinction matters) that there is a strong tendency for us to assume that we are, even if evidence is presented against it. Thus identity can be usefully understood as an ethnomethodology and 'identity' and 'accountability' can be seen as strongly related processes.

This section has shown some of the diversity of approaches to identity and attempted to take a path through them, based on the notion of at least five different senses of 'self' that are nevertheless commonly confused in the various literatures. It has also distinguished between classification, characterisation, and identification and stressed that these can be understood as creative, everyday processes. Finally it has suggested the notion of a 'will to fixity' that urges us to fix our other identities as strongly as our primary identities, so we can be accountable not just within a situation, but from one situation to another, without having to constantly reinvent ourselves.

As the next section will show, occupational and organisational identities are an excellent example of identities that are both relatively fluid – in that they are learnt in adult life and are always subject to change with shifts in job, company or career – and relatively fixed – in that they have a degree of stability between situations, such that it makes sense for someone to say 'I am a retailer'.

2.4 Studying Organisation

2.4.1 Verbs and Nouns

It is now commonplace (Law 1994, Cooper and Law 1995, Parker 1997, 2000) to point out that organisation is both a noun and a verb, an entity and a process. As Parker notes, structure-focused theorists favour organisation as noun, while agency-focused theorists favour organisations as verb (1997: 114). Under the former, organisations become iron cages. Under the latter, organising becomes an endless “flow of interpretive practices”, an endlessly unstable “stream of revisable methods for sense making”.

I offer the following preliminary definitions of organisation in its two forms.

Organisation (n.) 1. Nothing more (or less) than a concentration of people and things in time and space, built around a more or less common sense of purpose and bursting with diverse purposes and activities and objectives, many completely unrelated to and often at odds with the 'official' purpose of the organisation. 2. A concentration of cultures with a concentrated culture. 3. Something produced by people in order to magnify the effects of the actions of their bodies.

Organisation (vb.) 1. The process by which people order a number of other people and things in time and space. 2. The process by which people try to produce and maintain an organisation (see n., above).

To distinguish between these two in the text, I will use *organisation(s)* to refer to the noun, and *organising* to refer to the verb. This is not always possible when quoting others, however. Although I will keep this section as brief as possible, it has a lot of ground to cover, consisting of five further sub-sections: organisation theory (2.4.2), notions of organisational culture (2.4.3), notions of organisational identity (2.4.4), studies of senior managers (2.4.5), and studies of voluntary sector organisation (2.4.6).

2.4.2 Organisation Theories

Academic disciplines like geography, sociology, economics, and anthropology have all studied organising and organisations, but there is also a distinct field calling itself Organisation Studies or Organisation Science that has produced Organisation Theory. Historically, these studies have been overwhelmingly concerned with large, formal, capitalist, bureaucratic organisations. Hassard notes that structural-functionalism and general-systems theory achieved “intellectual hegemony over organisation studies for half a century” (1993: 50) and that the majority of these studies were complicit with the senior managers of such organisations, “addressing the problems of corporate practice rather than those of social science” (1993: 55). Only a small

proportion of studies focused on the perspective of workers, or indeed on managers as people rather than as functional goal-oriented mechanisms.

Hassard's contention that there is a strong modernist trajectory in organisational analysis comes as no surprise, given our mid-century "faith in the notion of progress and our absorption in the machine metaphor" (1993: 120). Weber is a massive influence on organisation theory, and Clegg goes so far as to suggest that Weber's work on bureaucracy ranks alongside, if not above, Smith's pin factory & Marx's conception of the labour process (1994). Weber sees bureaucracy as a particular way of organising, the archetypal organisational form of modernity, dating from the seventeenth century (Dandeker 1990: 158) in the context of military organisation, and from the late nineteenth century in the context of industrial organisation. It was further developed by the scientific management and mass production techniques of Taylor and Ford in the early twentieth century and by positivist sciences of organisation in the 1950s and 1960s.

The bureaucratic form was deemed the best and indeed only useful way of organising, regardless of the purposes of the organisation (voluntary, state, private, social). It was characterised by relations of authority and obedience to superiors; by complex, vertical hierarchical control structures; by a focus on the competent and rational performance of pre-defined job roles that were strategically designed by the heads of organisations to maximise the efficiency of human resources; by an expectation that bureaucratic employment positions were full-time and permanent; and by a demand for workers who were strictly 'at work' when at work, who left their emotions and personality and personal life out of their work, and who were motivated by loyalty and rationality. Of course (to paraphrase Latour) we have never been bureaucratic – the discourse of bureaucracy was never a completed project, never became total or reached its aims in the fullest degree.

Criticisms of bureaucracy since the 1970s can be seen as emergent counter-discourses, challenging the hegemony of bureaucracy and destabilising its claim to be the only way of organising. Some organisational thinkers attempted to reform bureaucracy, trying to strengthen it by applying newer organisational methods or, at least, acronyms of such methods, such as just-in-time production (JIT), total quality management (TQM) and Business Process Reengineering (BPR). Others claimed to want to do away with bureaucracy altogether, replacing it with flat hierarchies, layering it, reordering its authority relationships to 'autonomise' and 'empower' employees lower down the old pyramid structures. These writers stressed the need for inter-departmental teamwork, for an engagement with workers' personalities and identities, and for an understanding and deliberate re-creation of organisational 'culture' (Ouchi 1981, Drucker 1982, 1985, 1986, 1990, Peters and Waterman 1982, Deal and Kennedy 1987, Peters 1988, 1992, 1997). For some, this was seen as the 'postmodern' organisation (Clegg 1990: 176-235). Hassard takes a more robust view of the relationship between postmodernism and organisation theory, arguing that postmodern

analyses are particularly useful in studies of organisations because of the way modernity is ingrained in the very notion of organisation: "A postmodern analysis should focus on the production of organisation rather than the organisation of production" (1993: 133). Hassard also notes, however, the importance of distinguishing between a postmodern study of organisations, and a study of postmodern organisations (by which he means studies of so-called flexible specialisation and post-Fordism) (ibid: 132). I would argue that organisations engaged in flexible specialisation should still be regarded as modernist.

Since the early 1990s organisation theory has become more critical, more theoretical, and more engaged with social theory. The journal *Organization* captures this shift, and has helped "to construct new analytical narratives and ethical discourses that speak to the radically changed structural, theoretical and ideological realities we now face" (Burrell & Reed 1994: 6). Six key themes or tasks for the new organisation theory were identified (ibid: 10):

- mapping new organisational forms;
- understanding the power/knowledge discourses linked with these new forms, and evaluating their implications for social action;
- elucidating and assessing the sophisticated surveillance and control systems connected with these discourses;
- unravelling the interaction between organisational discourse and organisational identities, and taking seriously the cultural meaning and significance of organisation in late modernity;
- emphasising research as writing, as reflexive, and as potentially problematic in terms of interpretation, representation and authority, given the responsibility of the researcher for constructing social realities; and
- clarifying and evaluating the ethical and political relevance and impact of 'organisation', and of different 'modes of organising'.

These themes and tasks fit well with my own approach, especially mapping new organisational forms, and the focus on discourse and identities and different modes of organising. Yet this 'new' organisation theory sometimes overplays the value of 'organisation', potentially damaging the usefulness of the term. While endeavouring to praise it, Ferguson points in my view to the nub of the problem with organisation theory as it has been newly conceived (1994: 81):

Everybody organises. We organise our thoughts, words, lives, work, knowledge, politics.
We also organise, that is, we bring order to, our bodies, identities, histories.

Conceived of in this way, almost all human activity becomes 'organising', so the term loses its specificity and meaning. Whilst processes of 'bringing order' are crucial and fascinating for all social scientific research, we must question whether this is the best way to deploy the term 'organisation'. As hinted in the 'definitions' offered earlier, it is probably more useful to see organising as a *specific* process of bringing temporal and spatial order to a number of other material (human and non-human) things. This removes our mental ordering processes (classifying, decision-making and general thinking) from the term 'organising', while maintaining that these mental processes are of course essential to organising. It makes sense, I suggest, to



see organising as the *material* ordering of aspects of the world, which depends upon but is not identical to 'head-ordering'. This is not to accept an ontological binary between the material and the mental. It is only to find a meaningful usage for the term organisation and to posit that the difference between the mental and the material certainly matters to lay actors, and might matter to theorists.

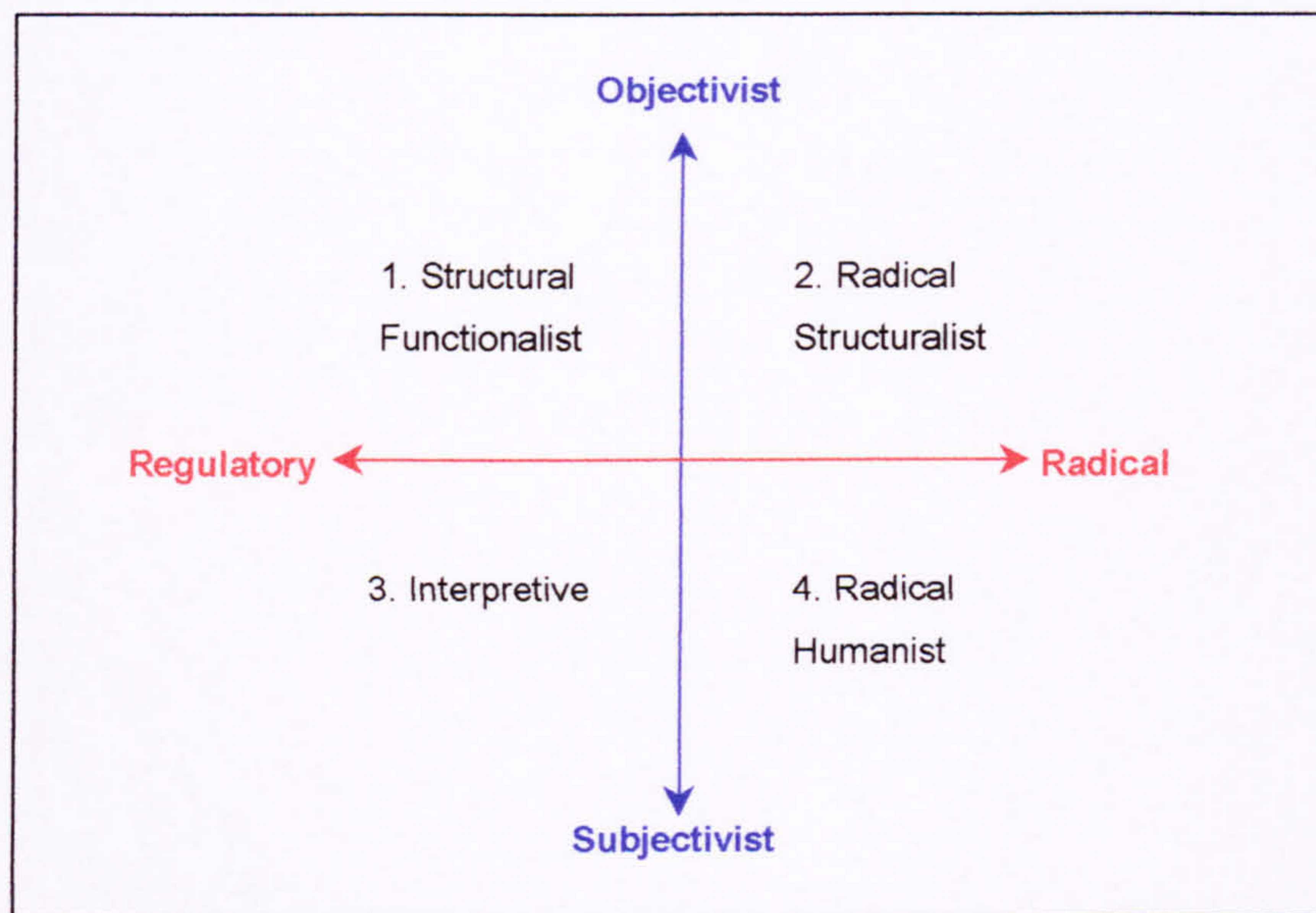
This 'new' organisation theory found that its involvement with cultural studies and social theory occurred only a few years later than a primitive concept of 'organisational culture' was inserted into managerialist studies. This has led to significant academic attempts to rescue the concept of culture in organisational contexts.

2.4.3 Organising Culture

Culture has been one of the most vibrant concepts within studies of organisation since the early 1980s and it remains both exciting and hotly contested. Parker (2000) offers a valuable overview of studies of the culture concept in organisation studies, based on Burrell and Morgan's (1979) well-known four-fold typology of paradigms in organisation studies. This typology is produced by the intersection of two axes by which an individual organisation study can be classified: objective-subjective and regulatory-radical (Figure 2.2). Whilst understandably sceptical about the value of this classification, Parker uses the typology to classify most studies of organisational culture (2000: 60-79). I will briefly summarise his overview.

Structural functionalist approaches, such as Peters' managerialism (1982) and Parsons' systems theory, aim to produce tools to help managers better control their organisations. These approaches assume that the scientific method will generate Durkheimian 'social facts', of which culture is one. Culture is seen as an epiphenomenon located upon and created by deeper structural processes and systemic factors such as organisation size, structure, technology, and position in the marketplace. Culture is the aggregate of an organisation's shared norms and values and it is essentially homogenous, holding the organisation together. It is assumed that the shared norms and values can be determined and modified by senior management. The social scientist must discover what is going on in an organisation and then tell management how the culture must be changed. Sometimes, the culture is viewed as an adaptive outcome of the organisation's environment. Culture conflicts are viewed as pathological but can be eliminated by management, underplaying the possibility of resistance or contradiction and overplaying the consensual nature of culture. Conflict is seen not just as unlikely but also as undesirable, creating the desire for 'shared everything', a desire that can be sated only by the expertise of "the theorist or culturally astute manager" (Parker 2000: 66). This approach portrays non-management organisational workers as dumb and culturally unskilful compared with the elite.

Figure 2.2 Burrell and Morgan's (1979) typology of paradigms in organisation studies



(source, Parker 2000: 60)

Parker identifies two key problems with functional-structuralist approaches: first the notion that culture is shared and consensual (when in fact 'it' is multiple, reflecting tensions endemic to the organisation), and second the notion that the meanings of culture are unproblematically read by organisational members (when in fact they may be multiple, confusing, and conflicting). He is clearly uncomfortable with the reification of culture and its use as a "dustbin category" containing all of an organisation's non-structural elements (ibid: 69-70).

Radical structuralist approaches to organisational culture are few and far between, given the disciplinary location and history of organisation studies and the fact that most critical work on organisations is now based on the work of the early Marx, the Frankfurt School, Gramsci or Foucault. Like structural-functionalism, radical structuralist approaches (usually based on Braverman) adopt a positivist epistemology and see culture as the froth above the main economic flow. Because the economic base is always identified as managerial capitalism, all organisations are seen as either capitalist or supportive of capitalism. Charity shops might be vibrantly confusing for Marxist theorists, questioning the relationship between capitalism and organisations. Culture is seen as the latest tool for controlling and exploiting workers and intensifying the extraction of surplus value. Parker again identifies "the neglect of local meanings" as a serious problem (ibid: 69), whilst noting that the paucity of work on organisational culture by this type of approach means it has had a very minimal impact on the debate.

Interpretive approaches see culture as something an organisation is, not something it has; cultures are ongoing social constructions, not cultural facts (ibid: 70). The scale of analysis is reduced to actor level phenomena: symbols, languages, and actions. Whilst actors might

identify systems, the researcher avoids ascribing any ontological status to these systems. The view that an organisation's culture can be manipulated by management is itself a cultural expression, and an organisation's 'code' is enacted only in practice (ibid: 70). The interpretive academic attempts to use ethnography, participant-observation and textual analysis to 'decode' an organisation through analysis of its symbols, articulating what organisational members may not notice. Parker notes that at its most subjectivist, this approach denies the solidity of organisations and affirms organisation as "a processual fiction that analysts and participants collectively construct" (ibid: 71). He in fact identifies three separate tendencies within this broader approach: *cognitive structuralism* attempts to uncover deeper structural-cultural aspects through analysis of surface symbols or talk and text, *symbolic interactionism* produces ethnographic descriptions of actors' own views of the organisation and tends to romanticise fieldwork and narrative style, and *eclectic post-structuralism* celebrates sensuality and myth by deconstruction and a focus on the "esoteric and neglected elements of organisations" (ibid: 72) including the repressed 'other' and everyday practice.

He criticises some writings within this general interpretive approach for maintaining the culture-structure binary and merely asserting the former over the latter, replicating (if reversing) the errors of structuralism. At their worst, he feels, interactionists simply rehearse actors' accounts using the analysts language and claim the new account is more valid than anyone else's, effectively reifying the 'native view' and engaging in methodological fetishism. He also notes a tendency to focus "on the extraordinary and local, rather than the commonplace and general" (ibid: 73). Finally there is often little room for understandings of power, because of the assumption that actors are equal in their ability to conceive of and classify their world and because of the lack of attention to the wider societal interpretations within which the organisational members are embedded.

Radical humanist approaches focus on organisational subcultures mapped onto classifications such as gender, class, age, occupation or race. Organisations are thus realms in which competing factions struggle for hegemony over the definition of the organisation's primary purpose, stressing both meaning and power. "Interpretive romanticism is tempered by a focus on the power relationships that help to constitute the different senses of subjectivity" (ibid: 75). The various factions might be based on social-interpretive divisions within or without the organisation. This approach often sees itself as emancipatory rather than romantic-descriptive or managerialist, focused on attempts to understand the "everyday patterns of constraint – 'the way things are done around here' – in order that a new way of doing things might be brought into being" (ibid: 76). Often using ethnographic methods, these studies show the cultural expression of power and resistance. Work on gender is strong in this approach (see for example McDowell 1997). There is also a strand (for example du Gay 1996a, 1996b) in which "the self is seen as a subject constituted in and through discursive ideas about 'career', 'self-management' and so on within the corporation" (Parker 2000: 77). In this strand, "culturalist management strategies hence become social technologies which aim to create new discursive

regimes populated by subjects whose identity is constituted through a form of continuous self-surveillance" (Parker 2000: 77). Similar are studies, such as Casey (1995), with a deeper sense of subjectivity using social psychology "to emphasise the discursive constitution of the designer employee self" (Parker 2000: 77). Parker sees "many strengths" in the radical humanist position, particularly its ability to deal with both actors' subjective meanings and the wider historical, economic and social forces to which these meanings are related.

Of course, ideas such as the 'market', 'organisation', 'manager' and 'employee' are discursive constructions, but they are constructions with considerable power to shape the way that individuals understand the world and also that seem to benefit certain people at the expense of others (Parker 2000: 78).

This thesis has much in common with these radical humanist approaches, but focuses instead on self-construction amongst those at the very top of organisations, not employees (or volunteers). Parker notes the "emphasis on emancipation" (Parker 2000: 77) in radical humanism, but it is not clear what emancipation would mean for top managers. Parker sees himself as a radical humanist with "an emancipatory agenda" (ibid: 83), but who is to be emancipated, and from what? To rid ourselves of what we might see as the hegemonic discourses of senior managers might mean dissolving the organisation, or replacing managers' discourses with new hegemonic discourses. Without hegemony, perhaps there can be no organisation.

Rather than take either a radical or managerialist approach, I attempt to do my best to understand the cultural processes that shape and are shaped by the top managers. Rather than presume there is something necessarily 'bad' about the powerful, I seek to understand how they experience their organisational lives. As noted earlier, my aim is to humanise rather than demonise top managers, not as a favour to them, but because it is better social science. This is not political neutrality or a claim to objectivity (Parker rightly insists there are no value-free descriptions of organisations) but an attempt to further understanding of the humanity and perhaps weakness of top managers. If gender studies of men have taught us anything, it is that men are also harmed by patriarchal understandings of society. If the same applies in organisations, top managers may need to be freed from ruthless and competitive discourses of managerialism and capitalism, just as much as the archetypal workers.

This thesis therefore questions the silence about top managers by writers such as du Gay and Casey. Whilst they stress the discourses that shape workers, and imply that these discourses are 'made' by top managers, they address neither the 'making' of these discourses by senior managers nor the discourses that shape senior managers themselves. My sense that discourses of identity are *produced* as well as received is an attempt to focus on the crucial moments of the production of discourses that may subsequently shape workers. As noted earlier, Gregson *et al* (2002) focus on the discourses of charity shop Heads and the impact of these discourses on charity shop staff and volunteers, but they are also silent on how and why these discourses were actually produced by the Heads and through what discourses the Heads are themselves shaped. This study follows Schoenberger in focusing on "the producers of the

dominant culture of the firm – the highest level managers” and pointing to the cultural nature of “the production of corporate strategies” (1997: 12-14). Unlike Schoenberger, however, I prefer to avoid viewing cultures as things, dominant or not (1997: 14) or as the “unexplained residual” after structural theories have had their say (ibid: 83).

The thesis also has much in common with social interactionist approaches to organisational culture, though without romanticising actors’ understandings or ethnographic research. On Figure 2.2, I would place myself dead centre, refusing both the objective-subjective and regulatory-radical binaries. It is not necessary to be either managerialist or anti-managerialist (Clark *et al* 1994), or either subjective or objective (Haraway 1997). This is not a ‘cop out’. Far from it. It is an attempt to hold together the tensions that pull us sometimes towards objectivism and sometimes towards subjectivism; and an attempt to avoid favouring either managers or workers, to avoid treating them as though they are on different sides of some great divide, instead of simply entangled in the same, huge, topologically flat network of social existence.

Parker’s own understanding of organisational culture is important to this thesis, because of its focus on identity. Indeed, as we noted when discussing Crang (1997) and Peet (1997), to talk of organisational culture is to turn almost inevitably to identity. The next sub-section addresses organising identities, where Parker’s recent explication of organisational culture will be critically examined and compared with Jenkins’ approach.

In summary it should be clear that I do not think organisational culture should be seen simply as the ‘leftovers’ of non-structural organisational elements, as a tool for managers, as a holder of organisational discourses (Newton, 1996; Hamilton, 1997; Litvin, 1997; Anderson-Gough, Grey and Robson, 1998; Steward and Conway, 1998), or as a thing (Graves 1986, Johnson 1986, Pedersen and Sørensen 1989, Soler 1990). All that seems wrong in understandings of organisational culture are found in this quote:

Culture is a set of key values, beliefs, and understanding that are shared by members of an organisation. Cultures define basic organisational values and communicate to new members the correct way to think and act, and how things ought to be done. Culture represents the unwritten, feeling part of the organisation. The function of culture is to provide members with a sense of identity and to generate a commitment to beliefs and values that are larger than themselves. Culture also enhances the stability of an organisation and provides members with an understanding that can help them make sense of organisational events and activities. Culture can be a positive force when used to reinforce the goals and strategy of the organisation. Chief executives can influence internal culture so as to make it consistent with corporate strategy. Culture embodies the values employees need to adopt if they are to behave in a way that is consistent with organisational goals. Top executives deal in symbols, ceremonies, and images. Managers signal values, beliefs, and goals to employees. Techniques that top managers may use to convey the appropriate values and beliefs are rites and ceremonies, stories, symbols and slogans. Symbols, stories, and ceremonies are techniques to manage organisational culture – something which is hard to shape by conventional means” (Soler 1990: 202).

Here, the messiness of diverse cultural processes and the inherently complex density of networks that are called an organisation, have been reduced to ‘organisational culture’: a shared entity, a set of normative rules, something that bestows identity, something that gives

stability, a way of policing values, and a “positive force” that managers can match to their corporate strategy using various techniques! Unfortunately, this remains familiar to everyday understandings of culture, making this type of approach all too tempting and, therefore, pernicious. Against this, we need robust but modest theories of cultural processes as entangled in the formation of identities; theories that have little to do with corporate strategy or normative values. We need theories of the practical and discursive formation of complexity and conflict and of identity as a simultaneously chaotic and ordering force that is neither positive nor negative but is implicated in power relations.

2.4.4 Organising Identity

Identity is not the only aspect of organisational culture that matters, but it is one of the most important. It seems to offer a way of understanding what people do and why they do it, through a focus on what they are and how they come to be. Kanter offers a good reason for studying organisational identity:

The most distinguished advocate and the most distinguished critic of modern capitalism were in agreement on one essential point: the job makes the person. Adam Smith and Karl Marx both recognised the extent to which people’s attitudes and behaviours take shape out of the experiences they have in their work. If jobs ‘create’ people, then the corporation is the quintessential contemporary people-producer. Organisations form people’s sense of themselves and of their possibilities (1977: 153).

I would add that the person also makes the job, at least to an extent. In expressing her central thesis, Schoenberger speaks of “corporate cultures and managerial identities” as though they are two sides of the same coin (1997: 6). She emphasises the importance of identity in her focus on “reflective thinking” rather than “instrumental thinking”, by which she means “thinking about what to be” instead of “thinking about what to do” (ibid: 82) and this strongly mirrors my own approach.

Our summary of studies of identity (2.3.5 above) suggested that there might be at least five levels or markers upon a sliding scale of self-hood that are commonly conflated in the literature. I also argued that classification, characterisation and identification are key generative processes and that identity is produced as well as ‘received’ or ‘adopted’. Finally, we might need to take seriously the idea of a ‘will to fixity’ that urges us to fix our identities in order that we can remain accountable not just within a situation but from one situation to another, without having to constantly reinvent ourselves. This understanding of ‘identity’ was based on a development of Jenkins, who also discusses organising identities (1996: 139-53). In Jenkins’ comprehensive study of the ‘identity’ concept he devotes significant effort to identity in organisations and institutions and it is very useful to compare his position with Parker’s, and with my own.

For Jenkins, identities are not just something we find within organisations. Rather organisations are “networks of identifications” with their distinctions between members and non-members and

distinctions internally among members based on positions, offices, functions, jobs and other classifications (1996: 139-140). He notes that organisation *requires* internal symbolic differences. Watson calls the production of internal distinctions the 'labour of division' of the division of labour (1997). Jenkins rightly stresses that it is not enough for an organisation to have this network of identifications. Networks of authority and power relations are also required if there is any attempt to co-ordinate the activities of organisational members towards some presumed set of purposes. Without an attempt to co-ordinate, there is no organisation. Organisations are therefore "institutionalised networks of hierarchical relationships, of sub- and superordination, of power and authority" (1996: 140). The classifications that we find in organisational contexts will always include, of course, classifications that are not unique to that context, such as gender, race, class, and the degree to which someone is intelligent, good-looking, assertive, caring, or knowledgeable (or stupid, ugly, weak, ruthless or vacant).

Overall, however, Jenkins focuses too much on the moment of recruitment into organisations, and too little on organisational processes occurring after recruitment, particularly the mutual moulding of the person to the organisation and the organisation to the person. He focuses too much on the process of applying the categories of member and non-member onto people (primarily through the recruitment process) and too little on the process through which the categories of members and non-members are produced and reproduced in the first place, and the nature and content of these categories. He looks at the processes through which people meet (or fail to meet) certain characteristics required by the organisational gatekeeper or recruiter, and the processes through which new recruits are made to feel part of the organisation through rituals of affirmation or confirmation, but there is no sense of how these characteristics are defined, or that they may be variable and shifting.

This does not necessarily point to a fundamental poverty in his general approach to social identity, for he stresses its dynamic and social nature elsewhere in the text. His tendency to see organisations as sites of fixity rather than fluidity comes from an attempt to identify 'social structure', to understand how social stability is achieved. And he is probably right to suggest that "if social structure is to be found anywhere other than in the aggregate abstraction of statistics, it is in institutions and organisations" (1996: 137). However, organisations are not *only* sites of stability and stabilisation (and Jenkins does not argue that they are, though this is implied in his focus). This thesis demonstrates the *dynamism* that is possible in the development of social identities within organisational contexts. It might appear that I am reversing Jenkins' error, implying through a focus on dynamism that organisations are sites *only* of dynamic processes of identity construction. This is manifestly not my argument – rather the thesis could be read as adding to Jenkins' work, such that the two works show between them both the inherent stability and inherent dynamism of social identity in organisational contexts.

Interestingly, Parker sees 'culture' and 'organisation' as "middle level terms between history and everyday practice, between agency and structure" (2000: 83) which mirrors Jenkins' view of *identity*. Parker's understanding of organisational culture depends upon notions of identity. He

discusses the “common categories of understanding” like cultures of management or cultures of masculinity that all organisations share, and the more specific, locally produced organisational categories and identifications, such as those between different functional departments and different job roles within the same company (2000: 82, 87-92). He rightly notes that “issues of classification seem to be at the heart of the problem. Deciding what is similarity and what is distinctiveness is the key to drawing cultural boundaries within, between and across organisations” (Parker 2000: 87). It is at this point that he mentions social identity. He feels that “any formulation of organisational culture needs to theorise it as a process of making multiple claims about membership categories – about ‘us’ and ‘them’” (ibid). He also mentions the *variety* of role commitments that people have and believes that it is necessary to talk about this in terms of ‘identity’ because it is “a rather more fluid concept than role” (ibid). Castells makes a stronger distinction between identity and role, based on the sensible notion that identity involves internalising a role:

[I]dentity must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called roles, and role-sets.

Roles ... are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society. Their relative weight in influencing people’s behaviour depend upon negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organisations.

Identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation. Although ... identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalise them, and construct their meaning around this internalisation

...
[I]dentities are stronger sources of meaning than roles, because of the process of self-construction and individuation that they involve. In simple terms, identities organise the meaning while roles organise the functions (1997: 6-7).

This might also be seen as the difference I have noted between identifying something (classifying a set of roles) and identifying *with* something (taking a role as your own) and tells us something about the process of identity formation.

Parker stresses “the potentially huge complexity” of cultural identity in organisations because of the almost unlimited resources which people can use to classify, and the fact that each member “may orient themselves differently at different times, depending on the context” (2000: 88-89). Such affiliations may be “contradictory in their allegiances and imperatives” (2000: 89) and everyone’s very complex maps will be different in some ways from the very complex maps of others. This stress on complexity and the multiplicity of members’ identifying classifications is important, I feel, and adds significantly to Jenkins’ somewhat static and simple explication of organisational culture. It accords with my earlier arguments about the millions of small classifications (2.3.3). Parker also seeks to show that cultural identity groups do not all have equal access to the resources of power, which includes the ability to classify or to make your classifications heard and accepted. In other words, some people have more power to speak and persuade others of their classification systems and thus to delimit organisational groups and identities. This has important implications for organisational research:

Focusing on the interpretive strategies that members (and analysts) employ to classify categories of sameness and difference then becomes central to describing organisational culture. This points us in the direction of attending to the local organisation of that language and to providing descriptions that attempt to re-present the symbolic practices and classification systems of people as they work with and within the material and social technologies that comprise their organisation. However ... the heterogeneous nature of organisational members is intimately related to the kinds of resources (classification strategies, material and social technologies, and so on) from 'inside' and 'outside' the formal organisation that they can draw upon. That a certain class, gender, profession or whatever benefits disproportionately from an organisation's activity is simply one example of this. Putting it simply, to understand how people account for what they are doing now it is necessary to understand how these accounts relate to their histories ... the endurance of certain classification strategies is the point at issue here" (Parker 2000: 94).

Essentially Parker sees organisational culture as the process of identity formation in organisational contexts. These identification processes can be based on local versions of discourses that may also be found in other locales, such as 'gender' or 'entrepreneurialism'. Potentially there are millions of other locales, but not a single general external 'society'. While local identity classifications are made, remade, taken and resisted only within this particular locale, these classifications and identifications can (and usually do) relate to other locales through (and only through) the material movement of people, things, of communicative forms from one locale to another.

Like Jenkins, Parker sees organisation as a key means through which stable social patterns are transmitted through time:

These patterns (structures if you must) are materialised as action, technology, institution and so on. Organisational culture is hence the specific set of patterns that are materialised within one institution. Without these patterns, social order would not be possible because we would have to start from the beginning all the time, inventing the organisation, and inventing ourselves, every morning when we turn up for work (Parker 2000: 232).

I agree with this approach, except in one important respect, identified at the very end of this quote. Parker ends with "when we turn up for work" instead of "when we wake up" because he is distinguishing organisational identity from personal identity. This is questionable. In what sense are our organisational identities not personal, and our personal identities empty of organisational elements? As Friedlander powerfully argues, we should see organisational identity as *part* of our whole identity (1994), while accepting that this 'wholeness' is itself a construction.

One of the reasons this matters is that I want to reserve the phrase 'organisational identity' for the identity that *an organisation* can be said to have – the various identities imputed onto an organisation by those within or without it. Later (~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors*) we examine the notion that organisations, and indeed whole industries or sectors, have particular values or characteristics associated with them. These associations are resources that organisational and sectoral members can draw upon in the production of their own personal identities. Simultaneously these organisational and sectoral significations are produced and reproduced

by organisational and sectoral members for various strategic reasons. The detail of this discussion is for later, however.

This sub-section closes by considering a few further relevant studies of organisational identity. First, the thesis aims to avoid some of the grander claims about epochal organisational change found in the accounts of Casey (1995) and du Gay (1996a, 1996b). Whilst these works are valuable in focusing attention on cultural aspects of organisation and, particularly the issue of organisational identities, both seem unnecessarily pessimistic about the ability of workers to resist the colonisation of their selves, mainly because they both portray this colonisation as rather monstrous.

For Casey, a study of one division of one company at one historical moment leads to the claim that "post-industrial technologies have brought about the end of the labour process as it is traditionally understood ... [because] post-industrial corporations are now able to design their own organisational culture ... [thereby] shaping post-industrial employees" (1995: 91). The desire of some senior managers in some corporations to try to better control their employees using new 'cultural' tools has been generalised to the whole of (post-)industrial society. Worse, though, this desire is assumed to be *actualised* without resistance. As Parker emphatically argued, the idea that anyone can 'own' or 'design' culture is merely the conceit of managerialists and gurus, yet Casey appears to uncritically accept these conceits and discourses. A 'critical' approach, in the post-Marxist sense, is therefore critical of cultural management but not critical of the *claims* of cultural management. Casey's political stance *requires* senior managers (or rather 'the post-industrial corporation') to be pernicious and all-powerful, so she makes them so, whatever the reality. Her eminently sensible view that "the project of self creation ... is enunciated within discourses of power" (1995: 13) is corrupted by her strange desire to insist that such discourses are produced only by managers, not by workers; and that managers enjoy not just hegemony but total power.

Du Gay also argues that it is important to study social and cultural aspects of the economic realm of production, as noted in our discussion of the culture-economy binary (2.2.5). He rightly claims that the shift towards 'service' and the growth of 'service' industries, often based on 'production' identities that are very similar to 'consumption' identities, means our analysis can no longer be purely 'productionist' and must use the tools of cultural theory (1996b: 4-6). Unfortunately, although he wants the term 'discourse' to overcome the agent-structure binary, it becomes a structuring agent in its own right "reimagining organisational life" and brooks no opposition, "construct[ing] particular identities for employees" (ibid: 6-7). Discourses of 'excellence' and 'enterprise' are "intimately related" to the political culture of the epoch (ibid: 54), and to the managerialist notion of culture (ibid: 56), and produce a set of expectations that "requires that all employees make the goals and objectives of their employing organisation their own personal goals and objectives" (ibid: 62). And these monstrous discourses are portrayed not just as representing 'the worker' as indistinct from the 'sovereign consumer' but are

somehow able to blur “the relations between production and consumption ... and between work and non-work based identities” (ibid: 65). In other words, the representations of managerialist discourses are again assumed to reflect the way actual identities are lived and experienced and created by actual workers. Du Gay admits that there are “enormous gaps” between the aspirations of managers and the situation on the ground, but fails to see this as a reason not to overstate the epochal importance of a managerialist rhetoric (ibid: 69). While agreeing that workers may be able to actively engage with this discourse instead of simply accepting it, he is silent about the discourses of classification and identification of the workers themselves. They can take or adapt or leave the discourses of management but not, it seems, produce their own. This is a gross corruption of actual organisational practice, for organisations burst with counter-discourses, endless new identity classifications, homespun philosophies, private jokes, creative resistance, and a host of non-organisation based identities that are nevertheless ‘brought to work’. Managerialist discourses may be more powerful than these other discourses, but they are not totalising.

This thesis owes more to the kind of approaches adopted by McDowell (1997), Law (1994) and Nixon (2000), even though they are all quite different. McDowell uses what she calls ‘economic sociology’ (which is close to early social interactionism and ethnomethodology) to explore the everyday constructions of gendered identities, while also accounting for the political-economic contexts of those she studies. Whilst her attempt to move beyond the ‘gender-in-organisation’ model tends to slight reification of the organisation as a gendered entity, the overall argument that organisational identity classifications are *locally specific* varieties of gender categorisations drawn from wider (i.e. found in almost all other local contexts) senses of gender differentiation is powerful, and similar to Parker’s approach.

Law focuses more on the organisationally specific cultures and identities of the scientific research organisation studied, particularly the tension between cultures of science and cultures of enterprise. There is more room for agency than in McDowell’s account. While organisational sub-cultures appear somewhat atomistic and undifferentiated, the account offers the useful notion of ‘modes of ordering’ that provide a way of thinking about the relationship between identities, discursive practices and the patterning of ‘cultures’. In other words, it allows us to imagine how individuals try to make semi-permanent orderings out of their shifting contexts. Further it demonstrates how power helps certain orderings become accepted by others while certain orderings help maintain power, so that orderings and power become mutually supportive.

Nixon also demonstrates the play of multiple views about how something should be organised, in this case the sectoral representations of the British advertising industry in the mid twentieth century. He stresses the contested nature of ideas about what an advertising professional should be (which resonates with the discussion in ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism*) and notes the importance of status as a resource in workers’ identities. While offering little detail about

how members of the advertising sector related to their sectoral body or their own organisations, his focus on the sector is very useful, as is the research focus on a profession or sector in formation, which allows us to view inchoate identities and the processes of identity generation before they become too fixed or patterned.

These three studies share a focus on organisational identities as socially constructed everyday accomplishments that are prone to patterning (recurrence over time), operate through and often legitimate power relations, draw on the identifications of previous situations and contribute to the identifications of future situations, but can potentially be freshly produced or altered at any time by any actor. My own approach borrows McDowell's sense of power and place, Law's actor-network-style approach and focus on local modes of ordering, and Nixon's sense of the need to study sectors and inchoate identities. These are combined with elements from the 'identity theories' of Parker and Jenkins. In addition I study senior managers.

2.4.5 Studying Senior Managers

If organising is a process of trying to order people and things over time and space, the study of organising processes would necessitate a focus on those most concerned with this ordering. One might imagine that this is the most senior managers or 'heads' of organisations (often called chief executives). However, citing Mintzberg, Hales (1986: 103) calls this a managerial myth:

"If you ask a manager what he [sic] does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organises, co-ordinates and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to those four words" (Mintzberg 1975: 49). There are myths held by managers, and myths peddled by published theories of management, and the latter tend to inform the former. Such myths are central to organisational discourses.

One of the most important 'findings' of the literature into managers is that the manager's day is "technical, tactical, reactive and frenetic", beset by constant interruptions, full of short face-to-face meetings which skip from topic to topic, and generally involves responding to the initiatives of others rather than initiating oneself (Hales, 1986: 96-7). "The notion of the manager as strategist, planner and thinker is another myth" (ibid: 97). However, this does not mean that the frenetic manager is failing. Hales notes that this type of organising style can be very efficient, with the absence of planning more apparent than real – managers plan on their feet and their reactive behaviour is an opportunistic way of achieving much in a short time. "Disjointed interactions are not a sign of impulsiveness but of sweeping a range of problems rapidly" (ibid). Networks and contexts allow terse conversations to be meaningful despite their lack of apparent specificity (ibid).

These points sound the useful warning that organisational discourses, personal values, and personal identities in organisational practice are more 'day-to-day' than strategic and ruminative. And when we realise that very little of a manager's time is engaged in strategic

organising and that many senior managers feel they are no more able to control the organisational 'system' than those below them in the organisational hierarchy, we begin to see that organisation is not really about strategic, rational planning. Rather *organising is performed* in informal, practical, unintentional ways; in thousands of micro-scale everyday actions of communication: meetings, corridor talk, phone conversations, managers wandering about their subordinates' work areas, train journeys, hastily misspelt memos, and tipsy lunches.

Related to this point about the non-strategic nature of much managerial doing is the argument that managers are also often unaware of the exact purpose of this activity. According to Bastons, "the fundamental problem facing management today is, above all ... understanding what, in fact, is being practised" (1990: 190). Similarly, Halford and Savage's study of 'Sellbank' demonstrated that "rather than there being a coherent new managerialism, managers find themselves in conflict over the sorts of business they are supposed to be carrying out" (1997: 116). This is not, however, the view of Nichols and Beynon:

None of the managers we talked to there was in any doubt that his job was to make profit and that if he failed in this his future with ChemCo was in jeopardy ... These managers are driven by the impersonal force of capital (1977: 192, 197).

Whether this difference of opinion stems from the different historical and organisational contexts of the research or the approaches of the researchers, the fact that there are such different views can only demonstrate ever more clearly that the purposes of organisations and work are open to debate and, therefore, implicated in formations of discourse and power. As noted in ~ 1 ~ *Identity and Professionalisation*, I am not studying charity shop organisations because they are unique in having potentially confusing overall organisational purposes ('are we a business or are we a charity?') but because they are *not* unique in this. However, in charity shop organisations the confusion is perhaps more visible (because they are relatively young organisations and do have this stark double heritage) and they therefore offer an excellent example of organisational confusion and its implications for the creation of identities and organising discourses. I am arguing that to see this confusion at its most powerful, while also focusing on individual identity formation, we should study organisational heads.

As will be clear by now, this thesis is not an examination of decision-making by senior managers. Neither is it purely a study of organising processes, or of power, though these are important sub-texts. This is a study of the formation of identities and discourses about charity shop organising, based on a study of the heads of charity shop organisations and their various relations with various others. It is useful to compare the thesis with du Gay's (1994) discussion of the way identities of managers are differently shaped by postmodern organisations and bureaucracies. du Gay is right to argue that:

The 'manager' should not be seen as a transcendental a priori category whose identity remains stable throughout all the changes it undergoes, but rather as a contingent creation (1994: 130).

But it is important that we have a balanced sense of who does this contingent creating, privileging neither 'external discourses' (which are of course internal and local discourses which are merely also found in other contexts) nor the individual manager. du Gay, as he did with his study of service workers (1996b, see above) gives too much weight to the former and too little to the latter. He argues that the discourses that characterised management literature and practice from the early 1980s no longer stressed the need for managers (and other staff) to be objective experts, to be obedient and self-denying, to be strict adherents to procedure and hierarchy, to hide their personal morals and values for the sake of the organisations. Rather they demanded that managers be market-orientated entrepreneurs, charismatic facilitators, proactive individuals who were ready to take greater discretion (agency), initiative and responsibility for the management of their own daily work and their own career development. Bureaucracy was portrayed as making a big mistake when it separated reason and emotion and demanded the latter be left at home. While bureaucracy separated the economic from the cultural and social, pleasure from duty, and work from leisure, the postmodern organisation was to do away with such stultifying thinking (du Gay 1994: 130-1, 133-4).

This raises two points. Firstly, it is necessary to analyse empirically *how far* such 'demands' are in fact met within the identities of individuals. While du Gay makes the important point that discourses required or called for these types of work-based subjects, it is also crucial to discuss the extent to which managers have genuinely changed. To what extent is this 'making up' of managers *only* 'make up', only cosmetic, just a 'work face' kept in a jar by the door, worn to work, and taken off again when at home? This question clearly relates to a discussion of work and non-work identities and to my earlier identification of five levels of selfhood. When your 'work' demands of you certain things that do not reflect your personality, is it in fact easier to separate work from home? When 'work' (in the so-called postmodern organisation) begins to demand that you should 'wear your personality' to work, do your work and non-work identities really blur or do you create a 'new entrepreneurial work identity' to wear, keeping your more inner selves untouched? These, I stress, should be empirical questions, not the realm of abstract theorising.

Secondly, it is important to understand not only how historically-changing "shifting representations" *make up* managers, but also whether (and if so, how and why) managers play a part in *making up* these shifting representations. Rather than view organising discourses as produced externally by someone else and simply experienced by the managers, we should at least ask whether managers themselves are the local producers of local organising discourses, narratives about how their organisations should be run. As a young organisational form, the charity shop organisation is still in the process of generating such discourses and is therefore an excellent site for researching their production and, crucially, the relationship with processes of classification and identification. Du Gay (1996a: 159) is right to note that

it is extremely problematic to assume that the identity of a domain of activity can remain the same when its basic organising principles are fundamentally altered.

In charity shops both the organising principles and the domain of activity have recently been open to construction by senior managers. This therefore allows for greater attention to be given to the 'agency' elements of discursive production, which is emphatically not to reassert a hard individualism, only to pull the debate away from a hardening structuralism in which discourses appear ready made and to which managers, at best, can only react.

This tendency to structuralism is also seen in Halford and Savage's study, in which they discuss how the workers of 'Sellbank' experience and respond to a culture change (1997: 112-116), but do not discuss who actually made the change happen. While they stress the embodied nature of work performance and identity and show how certain types of identity do better out of the new culture, their use of culture ('the new culture', 'the old culture') is rather atomistic and undifferentiated. Those who resist or avoid are not referred to as having their own culture or their own cultural practices, but are portrayed simply as 'counter-cultural' elements. It is nonsensical to see anyone as 'counter-cultural'; for everyone is cultural.

Halford and Savage do, however, offer a further useful point. They write that "older men and women are hostile to the attack on 'experience', feeling this as an attack on both their personal identities and their understanding of the bank's identity" (1997: 116). The term 'the bank's identity' is important, because it links the identity of people with the identity of the organisation. Here we remember Crang's (1997: 11) call for study into the interaction of differently scaled notions of identity (see 2.2.5 above). It is important to note that organisations can be said to have identities – though of course there are many different views over the definition of that organisational identity. This is not a reification of organisations, merely a sensitivity to the perspectives of actors, who classify and give names and symbols to organisations to signify key distinguishing aspects or characteristics, just as for the 'white chest of drawers' discussed earlier. 'Sectors' can be understood in a similar way. The thesis demonstrates that heads of organisations have most at stake in the creation and definition of organisational and sectoral identities, for these are intimately related to their personal identities and organising discourses.

Finally, it is necessary to ask how the 'big identities' – age, gender, class, ethnicity, and so on – affect senior managers. McDowell (1997) expertly demonstrated the generation and operation of gender identities in financial organisations and she reminds us that power and the 'big identities' must not be overlooked. Jenkins notes (1996: 150):

Managers are likely to have things in common: class background, 'race', gender, politics, orientation towards business, organisational and professional socialisation, etc. That they should behave similarly in similar circumstances is not remarkable.

Kanter, likewise, states that the "spirit of managerialism was infused with a masculine ethic" (1977: 156) and suggests that this was highly embodied:

Managers at Indsco had to look the part. They were not exactly cut of the same mould like paper dolls, but the similarities in appearance were striking. Even this relatively trivial matter revealed the extent of conformity pressures on manager (ibid: 157).

This process was self-perpetuating:

There is ample evidence from organisational studies that leaders in a variety of situations are likely to show preference for socially similar subordinates and help them get ahead ... Because of the situation in which managers function, because of the position of managers in the corporate structure, social similarity tends to become extremely important to them. The structure sets in motion forces leading to the replication of managers as the same kind of social individuals. And the men who manage reproduce themselves in kind (ibid: 157).

While we may question some of her language about structure, the findings show the importance of 'ascribed' identities in the reproduction of specific management forms and power relations. Jenkins' discussion of organising identities focused heavily on recruitment to organisations, based on ascribed and achieved identities, and while this focus underplayed the importance of continuing identification processes *within* organisations, it did confirm the crucial point that organisational identities often become self-perpetuating and are in many ways a function of patronage, with all its associated gendering.

There is a degree of diversity in the charity shop heads I studied, as the next chapter highlights, with a number of female heads and a variety of class backgrounds and ages. Race and ethnicity identities, however, were exclusively white, a common characteristic of voluntary sector organisation, to which we now turn.

2.4.6 Studying Voluntary Organisation

The voluntary sector (this sub-section excludes literatures on charity shops, discussed in 2.2.3 above) is significantly under-researched in geography, which remains 'capitalocentric' (Gibson-Graham 1997), beguiled by the state, and tends to equate 'unpaid work' only with the domestic economy, ignoring the massive global volunteer workforce. With the social economy estimated to be 9% of the UK's gross GDP in 2000 (SEL 2001) and by far the fastest growing sector of the economy (above mobile phones, renewable electricity, and computer software) this geographical attention gap is now a serious problem. Sayer notes that "people do not work only for money; the intrinsic quality of the work itself and the social relationships of the workplace matter too" (1997: 21) but conspicuously fails to discuss or even mention voluntarism, which is a fundamental challenge to theories of capitalist production and homo economus.

I suggest that studying voluntary sector organisations can potentially illuminate the boundaries of capitalism. Charity shops make profits, use business techniques, and have employees who feel exploited – but if they are not seen as capitalist then what, in fact, is capitalism? Is it merely the ownership of the means of production, and if so does critique of worker exploitation belong in a critique of organising more generally instead of a critique of capitalism in particular? These speculative questions lead to a completely different thesis, but are intended to highlight the importance of studying non-capitalist organisations. Handy points to the potential value of

studying voluntary organisations when he asks: "Is there lurking in the voluntary world a better theory of organising?" (1988: 1).

Research into the voluntary sector is vibrant and diverse, from a variety of disciplines. Historical studies have generally focused on the role of philanthropy and charity in relation to the state (Jordan 1959, Owen 1964, Prochaska 1988, Whelan 1996). Sociological research has looked at issues of social capital, gender and public trust (Coleman 1988, McCarthy 1996, and Tonkiss and Passey 1999 respectively). Dedicated voluntary sector researchers have often focused on voluntary sector relations with business or government, international comparisons, volunteers, or the definition of the sector (see for example, Rose-Ackerman 1990, Evers 1995, Kendall and Knapp 1996, Salamon and Anheier 1997, Davis-Smith 1998 though there are dozens of studies of this type).

Organisation studies has perhaps been the major contributor to voluntary sector research (important examples include Zald and Wallace 1963, Billis 1984, 1989, Blackwell 1987, Butler and Wilson 1990, Handy 1990, Kramer 1990, Hedley 1992, Billis and Harris 1996, Hall 1996, Stone and Wood 1997, Harris 1998, Rochester 1999) but almost all of this large output is limited to researching functions, structures, governance and an organisation's relations with its so-called 'external environment'.

There are occasional mentions of voluntary sector 'values' and organisational culture in voluntary organisations (Handy 1988, Jenkins 1996: 157) but these fall well short of genuine cultural analysis; Handy because of his crude through well-intentioned categorisations, Jenkins because he is making theoretical suppositions without empirical analysis. The two most promising pieces of research are those by Gregson *et al* (2002) and Scott *et al* (2000). The former has already been discussed. The latter offers case study research into the "everyday dynamics" of the voluntary sector and illustrates the "contingent nature" of voluntary action (Scott *et al* 2000: 1-3). Their research consisted of eight themes drawn from eight case studies. One theme is entitled 'Values and Identity' (ibid: 14-19), but (without explaining why) it focuses exclusively on volunteers and limits itself to answering questions such as "Why do people join and participate in voluntary organisations?" (ibid: 14).

There appears to be nothing else on identity in voluntary organisations, which is highly surprising given that the voluntary sector seems one of the most promising avenues of research into organisational identities. I hope to begin filling this gap by studying the organising identities of charity shop Heads.

~ 3 ~

Research and Methodology

3.1 Scope of the Chapter

This chapter begins by describing how the data were generated (3.2), how the cases were selected (3.3), and the processes of analysis (3.4). However, methodology means much more than listing and justifying our research methods (Hammersley 1992), so the chapter also establishes the ontological and epistemological approach adopted and addresses the issue of the researcher's role (3.5).

3.2 Generating Data

3.2.1 Interviews

Data were generated using two qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews and participant-observation. Desk research of secondary, quantitative data was also undertaken, explained in the next chapter, ~ 4 ~ *The Professionalisation of Charity Shops*.

The semi-structured interviews were intended to cover the spread of opinion about charity shop professionalisation amongst charity shop Heads and elicit these alongside discussions of their personal experiences and identifications. The interviews focused primarily but not exclusively on 'second generation' charity shop Heads – those who had been the first with dedicated responsibility for their charity's shop operation and that oversaw the rapid professionalisation of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The interviews took place in March to May 1999 at a critical moment: the first signs of a downturn in the charity shop sector were visible. A final purpose of the interviews was to suggest potential candidates for the subsequent participant-observation case studies. The interviews were therefore essentially about the production of discourses and narratives about charity shop organising and the Heads' organising identities.

Semi-structured interviews have several advantages over questionnaires or structured interviews. They produce richer and deeper levels of understanding (arguably for both interviewer and interviewee), enable a more open-ended and free-flowing 'dialogue' rather than 'interrogation' (Valentine 1997), allow interviewees to raise issues not anticipated by the interviewer, allow interviewees to express their ideas in their own terms, and allow for multiple perspectives to be expressed by the same person. Interviews are, of course, interactional social encounters where meanings are actively created by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). They do not give access to a single 'reality'. Whilst interviews are situated, socially constructed events, they are nevertheless able to provide useful information about contexts beyond the interview itself (Miller and Glassner 1997). Essentially, interviews allow us into "the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world" (McCracken 1988: 9).

Semi-structured interviews with charity shops Heads were particularly suited to my aim of understanding the discursive practices of the individual at the top of the organisation. I was not interested in studying actual 'doings' or practices – this was the role of the participant-observation case studies. The interview questions allowed for both diversity and even contradiction within the responses as well as triangulation of key ideas using different approaches to the same issue. The interviews were able to give excellent data about the construction of personal, organisational and sectoral identities because we discussed relations with a variety of 'others' and the interview format was open enough to explore interesting issues relating to these. The questions about career backgrounds, reasons for joining charity shops,

first experiences of charity shop organising and their ideal charity shop, area and regional managers, were very successful in this regard.

I conducted interviews with twenty charity shop Heads. The selection of the cases is discussed in the next section (3.3), the analysis in the subsequent section (3.4) and the interview schedule is shown in Appendix A. There were five categories of question, summarised here with the reasons for asking them:

1. *the Heads' career histories, the reasons why they entered the charity shop sector, their first experiences of the sector, and the main differences between charity shop management and their previous experiences*
 - to learn more about their career and identity context, their sectoral identities, their relationship with the private sector, and their narratives of charity shop professionalisation
2. *their ideal employees at different levels*
 - to illuminate their view of ideal worker identities and therefore what charity shops should be like, and also to cross reference with their narratives of charity shop professionalisation from the previous question category
3. *the nature of their everyday work and any 'organising principles' that influence their work*
 - to access their view of how charity shops should be run, but grounded as far as possible in their actual, everyday practices, to avoid rehearsal of management literatures or idealistic theories
4. *their relations with others, especially their parent charities, their actual shops, and other charity shop organisations*
 - to illuminate their view of these relations and therefore their positioning (identity) relative to these 'others'
5. *their view of the future of charity shops*
 - for 'policy' purposes, and also to cross reference their view of what charity shops will be like with what they should be like.

I was concerned that being too open about my focus on 'organising identities, practices, and cultures' would only hinder the interview and reduce the quality of the data. I therefore introduced a relatively 'inane' interview structure that grouped these five concerns into three simpler categories in order partially to disguise the purposes of my questions:

- Your Background and Experiences of Charity Shops
- Your Work with Others Inside and Outside Your Organisation
- The Future of Charity Shops

The interviewees were recruited by telephone and meetings arranged in their offices. The interviews were scheduled to last 1½ hours and I kept strictly to time, though some continued longer because the interviewee wanted to continue the discussion. They were tape-recorded and I explained to the interviewee that this was merely to free me from note-taking so I could

engage fully in the discussion. I explained that the tape would be erased after transcription. I also offered complete confidentiality in that no comments would be traceable to the interviewee and I asked each interviewee to read and sign a simple ethics protocol (adapted from McCracken 1988) to ensure they understood their 'rights' as interviewees.

3.2.2 Participant-Observation

In addition to the twenty semi-structured interviews, I undertook four periods of participant-observation, each with a different organisation. It is debatable whether these case studies should be called 'ethnographies'. Van Maanen (1995: 4) and Wolcott (1999: 83-87) both argue that ethnography requires an emphasis on "the culture concept", not just certain methods. Wolcott is concerned that ethnography is beginning to "mean no more than observer-present research" (ibid: 91). Fetterman defines ethnography rather more broadly as "the art and science of describing a group or culture" (1989: 11) yet he treats the 'culture' concept as optional. As the previous chapter discussed (2.4.3), I view 'the cultural' as a way of interpreting human practices, not 'culture' as a thing or a shared characteristic of a group that can simply be described. This runs counter to the views of anthropologists such as Agar (1980, 1986), Fetterman (1989), Schwartzmann (1993), Wright (1994), Van Maanen (1995) and Wolcott (1995, 1999). Nonetheless, my approach uses participant-observation, translates a 'foreign world' (that of charity shops) for an academic audience, and is centred on an analysis of inherently cultural practices (those of identity and discourse formation), all of which might earn it the title 'ethnography'. Ultimately, however, if the term ethnography is to relate only to studies that use the culture concept as defined by Wolcott and the other anthropologists listed above, then this research project should not adopt the term. This thesis is best conceived as an empirically-grounded contribution to theoretical and practitioner knowledges, not 'an ethnography' as "a textual description a culture" (Agar 1995: 112). The methods used here, then, are very definitely 'participant-observation fieldwork', not 'ethnography'.

My four periods of participant-observation fall into two distinct categories. The first was preparatory study gained through my work with the Charity Shops Group. In this period of paid employment for three days a week for a year, I kept a research diary of my own participation and observations. This developed into an excellent information resource about the charity shop world: people, organisations, ideas, comments, opinions and issues. The index I created for this research diary was essentially a database about charity shop Heads and the work of the Charity Shops Group (CSG). At that stage, one potential direction for the thesis was a sustained analysis of the formation of the sectoral body for charity shops – the development of the CSG into the independent Association of Charity Shops. Therefore this research diary also generated hundreds of thousands of words about the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of this process. Whilst the project eventually developed in a different direction, this research diary remained extremely useful in contextualising the charity shops sector in general

and inter-organisational relationships between the charity shop Heads in particular. This period of participant-observation was also essential in selecting the cases for the interviews (see 3.3.2 below).

The CSG research diary was not coded or analysed for the thesis for two main reasons. First, though my employer knew I was doing a PhD on charity shops, I had not mentioned that I was keeping a research diary. Of course, anyone can keep a diary, but in order to err on the side of caution in ethical terms, it was felt this diary should not be used as a source of data for analysis or quotation. Second, the thesis had to draw its boundaries somewhere, and while the sectoral relations of charity shop Heads are discussed below (see 6.3) it was felt that the internal workings of its sectoral body were a step too far from the Heads, however interesting. For these two reasons, then, the CSG research diary was used as background rather than core data.

The second type of participant-observation consisted of case studies within charity shop organisations. Three were selected through information generated by the interviews (discussed in 3.3.3). These case studies had two main objectives. The first was to generate data about the Heads that could not be generated through interviewing them, especially their discursive practices when dealing with other people. In order to achieve this objective, the participant-observation cases remained centred on the Heads themselves. This does not mean I simply 'followed' the Heads. I spoke and worked with a wide variety of people throughout the three charity shop organisations, in many sites where the Head was elsewhere. But I tried to think through the relations between the Head and whatever research site I was in at the time, as these two examples show.

1. I was always interested when a Head attended a meeting because when two or more people are present (in addition to me) and work has to be done, it is far harder for them to design their talk and police their comments to present a particular image to the researcher. Meetings offered three things that could not be achieved in interview: the way the Head actually 'othered' (portrayed, related to, compared with their selves, constructed the identity of) the other people present in the meeting, the way these other people 'othered' the Head, and the way the talk of the meeting constructed relations with absent people or 'caricatures' of absent people, such as 'the volunteer', 'the shop manager', 'the customer', or 'the sector'; thereby defining the members of the meeting as a united 'self' against these others.

2. When I was in sites such as shops where the Head was absent (in bodily terms at least), I would try to discover whether the shop managers or volunteers had ever heard of the Head, if and when and how they interacted with the Head, and how far they reflected or rejected the Head's organising identity and organisational narratives.

This hints at the second aim of the participant-observation case studies: to elicit alternative

views about charity shop organising. The primary focus on Heads is essential to the thesis argument that their identities have partly determined charity shop professionalisation, but this does not entail excluding other people, roles or perspectives. If the thesis was limited *only* to the Heads, it would risk being excessively narrow, introverted or, worst of all, decontextualised. The three case studies offer data about the organisational contexts of Heads, answering questions like:

- “Do others in the organisation see the need for professionalisation of shopfits?”
- “Are shop workers aware of their Head’s sectoral relationships with other Heads?”
- “Do area managers identify more with the shop workers in their area or with their Head, and how strong is the conflict between these two?”
- “How do volunteers’ assumptions about customers and donors differ from the Heads’ assumptions?”
- “Do managers of different charity shops in the same town have any relationship with each other, creating ‘sectoral relations’ at a different scale and level?”
- “What do regional managers think of the ‘profession’ of retailing and their own parent charity organisations?”

To put this another way, if we are really to understand the ‘self’ of a Head in relation to key others, it is crucial to develop an understanding of these ‘others’ that does not rely on the Head’s own portrayal of them. The Head’s portrayal of others is of course key to understanding her process of identity construction, but unless we have some sense of the *context* of this portrayal we have no way of judging the transformation that it represents. For example, if a Head is extremely worried that the organisation might potentially be sued by a staff member or volunteer who is subjected to obscene sexual behaviour by a customer, we are unsure whether to view the Head as sensible, over-cautious, or totally paranoid. If we spend some time working in shops and hear a story (as I did) about a customer who:

*“suddenly started rubbing his cock into a black stiletto shoe he’d grabbed from the rack, right in front of Patricia, our oldest volunteer!”
[Jenny, shop manager]*

then at least we have some context for the Head’s concerns¹.

The participant-observation case studies therefore overcame some of the inevitable problems of interviews – being told what the interviewee thinks you want to hear, being given the ‘company line’ on certain policies, being offered rational answers that bear little relation to actual practices. Whilst I have some confidence that the interviews were constructed so as to limit the effect of these problems, no interview can eliminate them. Most importantly of all, the participant-observation fieldwork allowed for the examination of *identity assertion in practice*, as we see in

¹ This section uses the cases without properly introducing them because they are fully introduced in the next section.

~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism* where identity assertions in interview are directly contrasted with practical identity assertions.

The three case studies were recruited by a letter and a follow-up phone call, then a meeting in which confidentiality and my initial activities were agreed. For them, the whole thing was undoubtedly strange. I began each case study by asking for a copy of the organisational chart and would discuss with the Head the organisation's various structures. I would then try to 'people' these structures, assess the Head's relations with the other roles in the organisation, and ask the Head to arrange visits to various people. For example, she might arrange for me to spend two days in a certain shop – the manager would hear I was coming but not really know who I was. Or I would spend a day with a regional manager, driving around south England in his car, occasionally stopping off at a shop. Or I would accompany an area manager to a 'shop inspection' and talk through in detail the work of an area manager. I might go to the property meeting, or the marketing meeting, or the field management meeting. Appendix B gives a full list of my activities. Throughout this time a research diary was kept, written each evening from my 'Headnotes', memories, and 'scratch notes' made in meetings or journeys or other spare moments (Clifford 1990, Ottenberg 1990, Sanjek 1990).

The participant-observation was not easy. I spent ten to fifteen days with each of the three organisations and, because they are all multi-site (from head offices, to shops, to meetings in hotels, to the cars of regional managers) and this time was not contiguous, my life was a complete mess for months. It was an increasing strain to meet new people every day because it involved adopting, accepting and rejecting different roles. This fieldwork was very definitely performed. On a single day, I had to be the unknowing student, the confessional priest, the untrustworthy spy, and the charming young man (see 3.5.3 for a full discussion of researcher roles). In some shops I had to eat more cake than anyone should have to, complimenting the baking skills of the old ladies who'd found someone to test their wares upon, or was brightly asked the politically impossible question: 'Whose cake did you like best?' In one shop I had to apprehend a thief and deal with his violence and insults. In meetings of senior managers I often had to deflect questions about other charity shop organisations, being quite unhelpful, and then minutes later ask for help setting up a meeting with an area manager or shop – taking more than giving. In one meeting, data were being discussed and I was called on by the Head to validate some information he had given about sector-wide performance – I knew his data was wrong and had to decide whether to be honest and risk both 'affecting the interaction' (as though I wasn't anyway) and annoying the Head, or whether to lie and just agree with him. (I opted for the former).

The most stressful experience consisted of an ethnography-style "arrival scene" on my first day researching VolShop. I had negotiated and agreed the access with the Head of VolShop, Eve, and we had decided to meet at her office so that I could learn what she does "on a normal day". I had no idea that she worked at home. My research diary records the 'arrival' and the tension:

We agreed to meet at a certain train station at a certain time; and she picked me up in her car. We drove, chatting, till we pulled up at a cottage in a village. Not a head office in sight. I was a bit confused and sat still, imagining the obvious explanation - she was dropping something off at a friend's house on the way to the office. "Well, come on in," she said. Surprised, I clambered slowly out of the car and followed her down the garden path. It all began to dawn on me - she worked at home, and this was her home. We went into her kitchen and 'had a cup of coffee', the comforting old routine. Then she shocked me: "Do you want to come upstairs?" I was totally flummoxed.

What was happening? What should I do? Would this have happened if I'd not skipped UCL's 'Fieldwork Risk Assessment' session? After an unnatural silence I mumbled something about finishing my coffee. She said, "Well I'll go up and check my e-mail. I'm afraid the office is upstairs while I'm getting the damp done down here, but pop up when you're ready." She went through a door which presumably led upstairs. I sat down and considered my options. The idea that she worked at home and had an upstairs office was not implausible ... but what if I went up and she was expecting me to ... I felt my face burning; "strong coffee," I rationalised. But this was real and I didn't know how to deal with it. Never say that the researcher's sexuality is irrelevant. I plucked up courage, went through the door, climbed the stairs, and at the top saw a room with computer, printer, fax, desk, chair, and Eve, sitting on the chair typing at the computer. My relief was almost inhuman. "Come on in", she said, "Sorry about the mess. You'll have to sit on the bed!" I eyed the roughly made bed with suspicion. I went in, sat tentatively down as close to the edge of the mattress as my bum could take, and she carried on typing. "I'll be just a minute," she said brightly. She finished that e-mail and the day just took off. I asked her about the e-mail and learnt all about a shops conference, and before I knew it five o'clock had arrived and we had spent the day with her 'working' and talking to me about her work and I had spent the day learning more than I thought I possibly could. Until I was on the train, I completely forgot I'd been on her bed all day."

Whatever the eventual relief of getting through this scenario in one piece, it highlights a common and inevitable problem with participant-observation. Whilst part of you wants to observe, to be the fly-on-the-wall who really is unseen, the other part of you knows that, because you cannot be unseen and have to be present, you'd rather do something than feel like a spare wheel. That explains the research diary extract under 'Colleague' in the various researcher roles discussed below (3.5.3), and the fact that, with Eve all day, we talked almost non-stop. Sure, we got on, and our endless talk was clearly a function of that, but even if we had not got on so well, I am sure that neither of us would have been content to sit there in silence, her working, me watching and making my field-notes. In other words, observation on its own is impossible unless the researcher is prepared to undermine the accountability of human interaction and either not get caught (spy cameras) or accept the censure (anger, disbelief, avoidance) of interacting humans. Simple observation is also an inadequate research

method, for it fails to elicit the meanings of actions. As I wrote in another "arrival story", on the Tube on the way to spend a day with Susan, Head of HospiShop, for the first time:

How will I DO research today? Shall I insist on being a shadow? If she works, can I bear to watch; can she bear to be watched? Or will I crumble under the pressure? Or is there a compromise - can I just LISTEN (and occasionally steal a glance) while appearing to do something else of my own? Should I have brought some 'work'? What could I have brought?

When I arrived I did my best to explain what I wanted to do, or NOT do! I wanted to, "Know what she does on a normal day". She seemed quite uncomfortable and replied, "I don't do very much!" This might also have been an attempt to deflect me away from a focus on her, a very understandable desire.

Observation, then, cannot ordinarily proceed without some form of participation. In my experience when there is one researcher and one researched in a participant-observation situation, both often end up 'talking about doing'. In the manner of a massively extended interview, albeit prompted by workday contingencies (phone calls, e-mails, things that have to be done), this interaction is based very much on the researcher's presence. In situations where the researcher is one amongst many, her influence diminishes and she is closer to observing the mythical 'naturally occurring action'.

In summary, the participant-observation case studies were extremely important in generating data about intra-and inter-organisational relations and discursive formations. They allowed me to see the Heads' activity when they were less able to police their actions, allowed me to elicit alternative views about charity shop organising, and allowed me to assess the Heads' relations with others from the perspective of those others. Most importantly, the fieldwork offered insight into processes of identity formation and the link between these processes on the one hand and narratives and practices of charity shop professionalisation on the other. Whilst the fieldwork entailed some 'unsure' moments, these are taken to be part of the initiation into academic research.

3.3 Selecting Cases

3.3.1 The Importance of Cases

Ragin (1992: 2) notes that "at a minimum, every study is a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and place". He also rightly argues that every study contains cases at more than one level. Similarly, Platt (1992: 24-35) shows that 'case' can mean a single observation (e.g. one utterance by a Head), an individual person that is observed (e.g. a Head), the interactional co-present situation of this individual (e.g. the marketing meeting), the general organisational context (e.g. the charity shop organisation), the specific sector or type of activity (e.g. the charity shop sector or charity shop organising), the general context or general type of activity (e.g. organisations or organising or identity processes), or general phenomena (e.g. charity shop professionalisation). Which of these is the 'case' studied by this thesis? Is every action I observed a 'case' of identity formation? Are each of the twenty Heads a case and all charity shop Heads the population? Are the three participant-observation studies the cases and all charity shop organisations the population? Is the professionalisation of charity shops the case and general material organising practices of all industrial sectors the 'population'?

The answer is that all of these can be taken as cases. We should not purify our studies by searching for one answer to the question 'what is a case?' As Becker argues, the answer to 'what is a case?' can only be answered for a situationally-specific research question and "every study contains not just many cases but many *types* of case" (1992: 207 original emphasis). White stresses that we must also remain alert to the 'cases' of those people we research. Cases are "for identity, for explanation, or for control" and are the outcomes of classification and identification processes (1992: 83-5): "cases matter; there is nothing innocent in how they are framed". In other words, defining cases is an exercise in ontology politics.

It is therefore essential to explain carefully the selection of cases. The main case selected was of course 'the charity shops sector' and the introductory chapter explained this choice: its recent growth, inchoate nature and inherently contradictory organising cultures make it a very valuable case for studying the relationship between identity formation and material economic outcomes. This is therefore a deliberately exceptional case chosen to highlight *productive* processes of identity formation and the assertion of identities in organising practices. The insight of the charity shop case should therefore be seen as potentially but not necessarily generalisable to the overall 'population' of the economy. In this way, the thesis offers modest theoretical developments that point to the need for further research into the material impacts of identity processes in organisational contexts. The two other main case selections are the Heads for interview and the organisations for participant-observation.

3.3.2 Interviews

The study restricted the total 'population' of charity shop Heads by defining 'charity shops' as "shops run by and for charities that sell wholly or mainly donated goods" (DG shops), thereby excluding temporary shops selling only Christmas cards (e.g. Cards for Good Causes) and shops found in museums, galleries, and heritage sites that sell only bought-in new goods (BING shops) (e.g. RNLI, National Trust, English Heritage). This is because those Heads running DG shops form something of a community, centred on the Association of Charity Shops (ACS), and have very little, if anything, to do with those running BING shops. DG shops also acquire stock in a very different way to BING shops and have very different customers. No charities with only BING shops have become members of the ACS despite being invited to join. Lekha Klouda, the ACS Executive Secretary, feels "volunteering is the one common theme [BING shops have with other charity shops], but overall they are very different organisationally, with a management culture much closer to the commercial sector. The issues they face are just very different to those we [DG charity shops] normally deal with," *pers com, Lekha Klouda, 3 August 2001*.

The selection of cases for interviewing the Heads was therefore made from a total of around 300 charity shop organisations. In fact, there are only around 220 documented charity shop organisations and around 80 'other' charity shop organisations not included on the databases of sectoral bodies such as the ACS or the *Charity Finance* Charity Shop Survey. These 'unknown' organisations come to light all the time but there is no real way of knowing how many there are.

The overall aim of the interviews was to produce a broad spread of opinion about charity shop organising and to talk with a diverse range of Heads. They were therefore selected to maximise variety. After fifteen interviews, a wide diversity of opinion had already been gathered, repetition started becoming noticeable and fewer new positions were being learnt from the interviews. To ensure the research project remained manageable and efficient it was decided to finish this stage of the fieldwork after five more interviews. There were therefore twenty interviews with Heads and these are a selection of cases rather than a representative sample. Some Heads run very big, independent charity shop organisations and spend every working hour thinking about charity shop organising. Some of them run tiny charity shop organisations, maybe just one shop, and spend less than an hour a week on shop matters. Others are between these extremes. Some Heads run chains of charity shops for national charities, others for local hospices. There are women and men Heads. They are all white and all in their late thirties, forties or fifties. Because of the existing trust and rapport built through my work in the sector (see 3.5.3 below), to obtain twenty interviews I had only to ask twenty Heads. This also probably produced a smoother interview and increased the quality of responses to my questions. I was more informed before my arrival at the interviews which allowed us to spend less time discussing basic, introductory issues and more time on the key issues.

Table 3.1 introduces the twenty cases. For each Head it gives their personal pseudonym and gender, their 'generation', and characteristics of their organisation: its pseudonym, size, physical closeness or distance from the charity head office, cost level and profit level. Actual figures for cost and profit level would uniquely identify the organisations so their data are in broad categories, as shown in the Key. The organisation pseudonym specifies whether it is a hospice or a charity.

Table 3.1 Interviewed Heads and their Organisations

<i>Head</i>	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Cost Level</i>	<i>Profit Level</i>
Bobby Walker, m	Second	Black Charity, c	small	high	medium
Sasha Grant, m	Second	Ginger Charity, c	medium	very high	high
Joe English, f	Third	Gold Hospice, c	small	medium	high
Danny Updike, m	Second	Green Charity, c	large	low	low
Andy Young, m	Second	Grey Charity, c	medium	high	low
Susan Parker*, f	Second	HospiShop*, c	very small	medium	very high
Ricky Kemp, m	First	Indigo Charity, c	very small	low	low
Ashley March, m	Second	Navy Hospice, c	small	medium	very high
Kim Noakes, m	Second	Orange Charity, c	medium	medium	medium
Nicky Legge, m	Second	Purple Charity, d	medium	very high	high
Hilary Quinn, m	Second	Red Charity, c	large	low	medium
Chris Vaughan*, m	Second	ShopsCom*, d	large	very high	high
Jean Bilôme, m	Second	Silver Charity, c	large	high	low
Sam Jones, f	Second	SkyBlue Hospice, c	very small	no data	no data
Francis Sharpe, m	First	Tan Hospice, c	small	high	very high
Georgie Rogers, m	Third	Turquoise Charity, c	medium	medium	high
Vivian Hodgson, f	Second	Violet Hospice, c	very small	medium	very high
Eve Turner*, f	Third	VolShop*, c	medium	low	high
Terry Ingham, f	Second	White Hospice, d	small	medium	very high
Charlie French, m	Second	Yellow Charity, d	large	high	high

KEY:

Head: randomly chosen pseudonym, plus gender m=male, f=female

Generation: first = undedicated manager, second = first dedicated Head, third = subsequent dedicated Head

Organisation: randomly chosen colour as organisation's pseudonym, plus head office location c=close d=distant

Size (shop numbers): very small=1 to 10, small=11 to 50, medium=51 to 200, large=over 200

Cost Level (£ per shop per week): low=under 700, medium=700 to 999, high=1000 to 1400, very high=over 1400

Profit Level (£ per shop per week): low=under 150, medium=150 to 199, high=200 to 300, very high=over 300

Listed by organisation pseudonym. Data from 2001 except Violet Hospice and HospiShop from 2000.

* = identifies the participant-observation case studies. Sources: Goodall 2001b, Goodall 2000b

Note that all the 'large' organisations and all but one of the 'medium' organisations are run by men. Five of the six women run 'small' or 'very small' organisations. 'Generation' refers to the status of the Head in the history of their charity shop organisation: First Generation refers to

those who are not dedicated managers of the shops and merely treat them as one small aspect of their much wider duties; Second Generation refers to Heads who are the first person to have sole and dedicated responsibility for the chain of shops – those primarily responsible for the professionalisation process (which is why most interviewees are of this generation); and Third Generation refers to those who have replaced a Second Generation Head and therefore joined their shops organisation after its initial ‘professionalisation’. The Third Generation is a fascinating group since their challenge has been to deal with existing professionalisation rather than professionalise the shops themselves. They are thus a source of useful alternatives to professionalisation. One participant-observation case study focuses on a Third Generation Head.

The interview selection succeeds in covering a variety of cost and profit levels. The cost level gives an indication of the ‘cost’ policy pursued by the Head and can be read as ‘the degree of professionalisation’. The profit level column gives a relatively objective measure of the success of the shops operation. Both the cost and profit level are on a ‘per shop’ basis (averaged per charity) so are comparable between organisations of different sizes. Profit is gross.

The most successful organisations have a ‘very high’ profit level: all six organisations at this level are hospices and five have ‘medium’ expenditure. The table also indicates that the same level of expenditure can lead to very different levels of profit. The five charities with ‘high’ expenditure, for example, have very different levels of profit: ‘low’ for Silver Charity and Grey Charity, ‘medium’ for Black Charity, ‘high’ for Yellow Charity, and ‘very high’ for White Hospice. The size of the shops operation also fails to determine profit and cost level. The five large charities, all with over 200 shops, have ‘low’, ‘high’ and ‘very high’ expenditure and both ‘low’ and ‘high’ profits.

Table 3.2 *Characteristics of Interviewed Heads and their Organisations*

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Organisation Type</u>		<u>Generation</u>	
male	14	charities	13	first	2
female	6	hospices	7	second	15
				third	3
<u>Size</u>		<u>Cost Level</u>		<u>Profit Level</u>	
very small	4	low	4	low	4
small	5	medium	7	medium	3
medium	6	high	5	high	7
large	5	very high	3	very high	5

The frequency of the main characteristics of the selection are summarised in Table 3.2. The selection is not exactly proportionate to the prevalence of these characteristics in the sector as

a whole, because it is not intended to be a representative sample. Nevertheless the overall characteristics do generally reflect those found in the sector. The relationship between the Head's gender and organisation size, for example, is general to the sector. One difference between the selection and the sector is the higher proportion of large charities in the selection. There are only ten such charities in the sector as a whole, so half of them are represented here. Conversely only four of the estimated 200 very small charities are sampled. This bias is intentional since over two thirds of all charity shops are part of large chains (see Table 4.2 in sub-section 4.2.3 below) and so they deserve to be well-represented in the interviews. The large charities also exert more influence on the sectoral discourses of charity shop organising, for example through their more prominent role in the Association of Charity Shops, and were those that led the dominant charity shop professionalisation process.

3.3.3 Participant-Observation

I undertook four periods of participant-observation. The first participation-observation exercise was with the inchoate Association of Charity Shops, the sector-wide body for charity shops. This provided extremely useful preliminary research into charity shops and allowed for the development of strong networks that improved the overall access and quality of the project.

The three other periods were with individual charity shop organisations of various sizes and cultures of organising. They were selected primarily for differences of approach to charity shop organising and professionalisation, as highlighted in interview. They were also selected because all three are successful in profit terms – HospiShop has 'very high' and ShopsCom and VolShop have 'high' weekly profit per shop. Yet they achieve their success through quite different cost approaches – HospiShop is 'low', VolShop is 'medium' and ShopsCom is 'very high'. Finally, they were selected to give a mix of sizes and organisational types: ShopsCom is a large charity, HospiShop is a small hospice, and VolShop is a relatively small charity. All the interviewed Heads and their organisations were plotted on a matrix based on these criteria (profit, costs, size, organisation type, and cultural organisational approach). These three organisations were highlighted as the first choices for the participant-observation studies. Fortunately, all three agreed to take part.

ShopsCom is large, with over 200 shops, and the most aggressively commercial of the three. It raises money for a well-known UK charity, is centralised, has paid managers in every shop as well as intermediate management levels (i.e. area and regional managers). It is run as far as possible like a profit-making retail operation. The shops organisation is mostly independent of the main charity.

Chris Vaughan, the Head of ShopsCom believed charity shops can be successful only if they are organised like commercial retailers. The Head claimed the term professional for himself and

those like him, using it to refer to his specialist knowledge area - retailing. For him, charity shop professionalism was *retail* professionalism, and charity shop professionalisation was a process of bringing commercial retailing techniques to the charity shop sector. This involved standardisation, centralisation, universal procedures and the limiting of local discretion. Knowledge and competency were presumed to reside in the boardroom. The voluntary, aged, traditional, colloquial and feminine culture of the shops was viewed almost as threatening to the Head and as damaging to the organisation. This culture was dubbed unprofessional and incompetent and power was taken from it.

HospiShop is the smallest of the three, with under 10 shops, raising money for a hospice that cares for terminally ill people. It also has paid managers in its shops, with one exception. The head of shops has plenty of autonomy over the shops but unlike her counterpart at ShopsCom has daily contact with the charity because her office is in the hospice building itself. She also has daily contact with the shops because there is no intermediate management structure. She is as likely to be pricing stock as making strategic business decisions.

Susan Parker, the Head of HospiShop believed that over-professionalisation was damaging to charity shops. She felt there were moral limits to the amount of money that should be spent on charity shops. Because she manages a small number of shops and does not need any intermediate management levels, she had a much lower sense of 'loss of control' compared with Chris at ShopsCom, leading to a strongly decentralised approach. This approach was also a result of her personal 'attitude' or identity – she disliked management by diktat and was interested in leaving her shop managers alone as much as possible and simply keeping them happy, for they were the ones with the knowledge and competency to perform their jobs. Her low cost approach to running the shops was extremely successful in financial terms – partly because hospice shops enjoy very high levels of public support in terms of volunteer time and quality donated goods.

VolShop differs from the other two in its strong ethos of voluntarism. Its shops are staffed only by volunteers and the shops operation is fully integrated into a department of the main charity that explicitly focuses on supporting rather than managing volunteers. VolShop is a relatively small organisation but larger than HospiShop.

Eve Turner, Head of VolShop, had joined VolShop because of its strong ethos of voluntarism, something she was passionate about. The policy of not employing paid shop managers is fundamental to VolShop and to Eve. Her approach questions the very meaning of charity shop professionalism as being about retailing, producing a new version of charity shop professionalism based on the distinctiveness of the voluntary sector. To Eve, professionalism means *charity professionalism*, not retailing. This involves running the organisation as democratically and inclusively as possible, devolving responsibility to the volunteers in the shops, and stressing the importance of volunteering as a principle. At VolShop the top

managers are not really top managers at all, or at least they try to avoid that role. They want to be *support* staff for the volunteers that fill their charity shops – and this organisation does have one of the highest levels of volunteer contribution per shop (Goodall 2000a). Knowledge and competency are presumed to stem from the backrooms of these shops, where the key business decisions on stock selection and pricing are actually made. The centralising and universalising tendencies that the ShopsCom retailers called professionalism is viewed by these VolShop support staff as a fundamental threat to voluntarism and charity professionalism.

These three summaries are of course gross simplifications. In asserting that certain people are 'like this', the summaries imply they are always 'like this', with fixed identities. Whilst we might posit that people do have relatively fixed approaches to certain things, analysis of participant-observation data can only observe the *practice* of certain approaches in certain situations. Rather than classify people too strongly as a particular type, therefore, it is better to ask *when* they practice certain identifications. This is a matter of analysis, the subject of the next section.

3.4 Analysing Data

For Fetterman, writing up and analysis is "the most creative step of ethnographic research" (1989: 21). I disagree. Analysis requires a different *type* of creativity to that which is needed in abundance in the generation of the data, in the design of an interview, and in the minute by minute performance of participant-observation. Nonetheless, analysis is a creative activity.

My general approach to analysis draws on Silverman's suggestion that we should focus on what the people we study are doing rather than attempt to access the way they 'see' the world (1993: 51-58). In studying the organising cultures and identities of the charity shop Heads, I was fundamentally interested in their *practice* of these identities. And my approach to identity forced me to avoid making identity statements that were 'closed' and fixed and attached to people in all situations. Silverman argues that it is much healthier to try to understand *when* certain identities come into play, so that identification can be understood more as an ethnomethod than a characteristic (ibid).

The interviews were transcribed at a medium level of detail, including some 'false starts' and pauses, but excluding detailed description of intonation, exact moments of overtalk, or accurate timing of pauses. The objective of the interviews was to elicit narratives about charity shop organising and identities, not to produce data for the micro-analysis of talk. The transcriptions were coded using NUDIST. This involved reading each transcription in detail and assigning a 'code' to each segment of talk to classify it. These codes emerged from the data – they did not pre-exist. Many segments were placed in more than one code, so that, for example:

The ladies in the shops are very much traditional and what we have to do is somehow professionalise them to keep up with our competitors

was coded in seven different places: under 'identity', 'gender', 'traditional vs modern', 'professionalism', 'staff management', 'relations with shops' and 'competition'. This process generated 370 different codes over six levels, grouped into 27 first-level codes, listed in Appendix C. These are in a tree-like structure, with the first-level codes each including sub-codes and these sub-codes each including sub-sub-codes and so on to the sixth level. The ten volumes of research diary were also coded into NUDIST, creating 290 codes grouped into 16 first-level codes (also shown in Appendix C). This was an extremely labour intensive process and involved the constant reclassification, reordering, and renaming of codes. I would ask myself, for example, whether the 'professionalism' code should be put as a sub-code below 'identity', remain as a sub-code under 'knowledge and competency', or get its own code. Asking this question is an example of the creative work of theorising.

Because of the breadth and depth of the participant-observation fieldwork, its 16 first-level codes were clearly higher-level codes than the 27 first-level codes from the interview data. The

latter and all their sub-codes were therefore integrated under the 16 participant-observation codes to produce a final coding tree of 680 codes containing both interviews and participant-observation data.

These 16 first-level codes were all then cross-tabulated with each other by pen and paper to develop a sense of their co-relationship. I 'scored' the strength of the relationship between each pair of codes – none, weak, medium, strong, very strong – and then added the scores for each code. From these scores and the patterns of relationships between the codes, I categorised each first-level code in one of three ways. Those that scored high because they had strong relationships to many codes *and* also had a good spread because they related in some way to almost all the other 15 codes, were dubbed 'Major' codes. There were five of these – Power, Organising, Identity, Professionalism and Workplace Practices. Those that related to only a few other codes, or scored low, were dubbed 'Minor' codes. Finally, those that scored medium *and* related to almost all other codes were dubbed 'Threads'.

I then examined various combinations of the five Major codes and thought about them in relation to the literatures I had read. I asked which combination worked best to form a coherent thesis argument, explaining the professionalisation process and the 1998-2001 downturn in charity shop performance and adding to theories of identity and organisation. From this I demoted Power and allowed it to become a sub-text through the thesis. I decided that Professionalism could be seen as a 'case' of Organisational Identities so should be a major example rather than a Major code. And I promoted Identity, Organising and Workplace Practices and produced chapter outlines that explored these in different ways. Three of these chapter outlines were selected, for their variety and coherency in relation with each other.

The major benefit of using NUDIST was that it allowed extremely complex coding to be undertaken without "mountains of annotated papers" or being limited by the number of differently coloured pens at my disposal (Crang 1997:187). It also allowed for rapid and complex text searching, for example: 'give me all the segments where a Head says "I" and "professional" in the same sentence during meetings with their direct sub-ordinates.' Here a particular character, particular talk, and a particular context could be combined in a single search. This was extremely useful both in asking questions that could contribute to theoretical thinking (such as 'do people talk of the unprofessionalism of others *more* than the professionalism of themselves?') and in locating evidence once the thesis argument and chapter structure had been decided.

Interview data are used in subsequent chapters to add breadth to the three case studies, supporting or enriching their findings. They also form the central focus of ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift* where the career histories of the interviewees and their entry into charity shops are examined. That chapter is an analysis of historical self-narratives.

Data given in this thesis are drawn verbatim from the transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews and the research diary as it was written. Quotations have generally had redundant 'umm's, repetitions and false starts removed. Pauses and absent material are indicated by (...). Capitals are used to denote emphasis by the interviewee or informant. [Square brackets] denote my own current insertions into either the interview transcripts or research diary, usually to clarify meanings that were overly indexical. {Curly brackets} denote additional notes about the interview, such as {inaudible} or {laughter}. For transparency and clarity, interview quotes are in *Arial italic*, research diary quotes are in *script and shaded boxes*, and literature quotes are in Times New Roman.

3.5 Research Politics

3.5.1 Ontology

My ontological stance is well illustrated by a quick dissection of this quote from Allen and du Gay (1994), cited in Halford and Savage (1997: 109):

We might argue that the boundaries between economic, social and cultural processes are blurred. More radically, it can be claimed that no purely economic, social or cultural relations are distinguishable but, rather, that each is already embedded within the other. This is not to deny the significance of the economic but to indicate that the economic is already cultural.

The term 'distinguishable' is crucial, but unclear. Do they mean that economic, social and cultural relations cannot be distinguished even though they might exist (an epistemological point) or do they mean they do not exist (an ontological point)? This partly depends on the force of our ontology. It is possible to argue that aspects of the endless, complex stream of life can be said to *exist* as economic, social and cultural relations once they have been distinguished as such. In other words, if people think something is real, it is real (Jenkins 1996a: 83-4).

It is as though three friends lie on their backs in a field, looking up at clouds and asking: 'what do you see?' The clouds shift and always the dragon becomes a lamp and the spear becomes a leaf. So it is with our attempts to 'see' human life. The things we impute onto life may not actually be there, but they have a reality to us. What we must guard against is the person who sees a dragon and then refuses to hear the views or see the perspectives of others, insisting the cloud IS a dragon and the others are wrong. This person will not even *try* to look for the lamp, the sad woman, or the anvil, for he is convinced his own vision is "really real", the only "authentic vision" (Haraway 1997: 16). So it is when people claim that certain aspects of life are economic and should not be seen in any other way. With human life, of course, we can see things as cultural, political, social and economic and still only have scratched the surface of the millions of ways of seeing. To judge their value requires criteria and evidence and is an important but difficult task. Developing theory is partly about increasing the number of ways of seeing, but it also requires the modesty of accepting your view is only one amongst millions. That is the claim for this thesis: it presents a photograph of a small portion of the huge and shifting skies of life, where the choice to press the button at a certain moment and to frame the shot in a certain image and level of zoom was mine, not the choice of the moving sky itself. I hope that by the end of the thesis, the reader will see why the image produced can show us some things we may not have seen before, or at least not so clearly.

This stance owes most to the approaches that have been called *actor-network theory*, a term that Law notes was "intentionally oxymoronic" (1999: 5) but has become "some kind of

monster". Latour believes it is beset by four difficulties, "the words 'actor', 'network' and 'theory' – without forgetting the hyphen" (1999: 15). Several aspects of this "diasporic" actor-network approach, or sociology of translation, are applied here (Law 1999: 10). First, the importance of "waging war on essential differences" through "relational materiality" (ibid: 7, 4). This strongly relates to discussions of identity (see 2.3 above). Second, the sense that actors and agency are network effects (ibid: 5) and that "everything is uncertain and reversible, at least in principle" (ibid: 4). This also relates to identity, as does the view that all 'things' (human and non-human) are semiotically created as things, and should not in principle be hierarchically differentiated in terms of agency (Latour 1993: 10-12). Identity, it seems, is predicated upon or at least implicated within ontology. Third, and relatedly, the need for elision between agency and structure in a "topologically non-conformable ... sociotechnical world" (Law 1999: 7). This means that, like agency, structure is a network effect and conscientious social scientists should avoid bringing into the empirical arena any pre-existing assumptions about the difference between or existence of agency and structure. Fourth I am willing to accept that there is no necessary difference between the material and the social, that each is a performative relation (ibid: 4, 8). Beneath all of these ontological stances lie the deeper senses that "the reality we live with is one performed in a variety of practices" and that our ontology is inherently political (Mol 1999: 74-5).

In summary, this ontology is 'neutral', by which I mean that it avoids, as far as possible, ontologising *prior* to empirical research. This does not imply it is politically neutral, for all ontologies are political: defining what exists is a first step in determining what should be and therefore what should be done. This thesis has a weak ontology, such as its reticence to categorise notions of selfhood (see 2.3.2 above) and its overall interpretive tone, emphasising the multiple ways the world can be read. Sociologies of translation tend to demand the production of narratives that are non-simplistic, actor-oriented (without privileging any type of actor, such as humans), and contingent. At this point, ontology melds with epistemology.

3.5.2 Epistemology

A key epistemological debate, perhaps *the* key epistemological debate, is that between the realist and relativist conceptions of knowledge. Hammersley's explication of the realism/relativism conundrum within ethnography has wider epistemological relevance. Total realism is implausible because it necessitates positing one reality as 'real' and the others as 'false', a position that abandons the ethnographic task of understanding the *differing perspectives* of those we study (1992: 45). Conversely, in total relativism nothing exists independently of the ethnographies that are produced, so anything can be a 'true' description. Given the claim that all knowledge is culturally relative, including the claim itself, we are "abandoned in circularity" (ibid: 48-49). Ethnography, notes Hammersley, costs time and money. If any description counts as valid, then fieldwork is unnecessary – it is far more efficient

to sit in one's armchair and manufacture descriptions (ibid: 49).

Hammersley resolves this dilemma using 'subtle realism' (ibid: 50-52), in which we accept the ontological status of phenomena outside of our descriptions and treat such phenomena as knowable, but must fall short of believing that we can have unmediated contact with them and must realise that we can never be sure of the validity of our knowledge. Under subtle realism, then, knowledge becomes a matter of 'reasonable confidence', based on plausibility, credibility, compatibility and evidence. The process of representation is no longer one of reproduction. There can be "multiple, non-contradictory and valid descriptions and explanations of the same phenomena."

In ethnography, this *deprivileges* 'being there' as the basis of validity, but accepts that 'being there' may be very important in providing evidence to support the descriptive claims. The validity of academic work cannot rely on its 'truth': how accurately it represents those features of the phenomenon it intended to describe, explain or theorise (ibid: 69). Belief, not certainty, is the key. Validity is judged on the adequacy of evidence. Evidence can always be challenged to the nth degree, and the basis of evidence likewise, so that we could ask for evidence of the evidence, but in everyday life there are acceptable levels of evidence, and notions of reasonable doubt. Academic research works in the same way, but usually to a greater level of evidence (ibid: 69-70).

This evidence-based approach to 'truth' has much to commend it and is very useful. Yet, despite appearances, it remains somewhat objectivist. It focuses on what it is we are trying to know and asks how well it can truthfully be known, but remains silent on the position and goals of the knower. Because he is an 'ethnographer' commenting on ethnography, Hammersley assumes that the goal of social research is to *describe* the phenomena experienced, so the main issue is how modest we make these descriptions. As Thrift (1996: xi) implies, however, *modest goals* are as important as modest descriptions:

I am not particularly interested in producing a finished, systematic theory of modernity or postmodernity ... , in part because I do not believe that such a feat is possible (or necessary) and, in part, because too many attempts to do so have been laced with all kinds of customs and traditions ... which are actually to do with forming a spectacular watchtower ... I am also not particularly interested in going to the opposite extreme, which, in fact, only holds up a mirror to these customs and practices, by adding to the multiple kinds of self-conscious commentaries on academic texts which now seem to be in vogue. (xi)

Thrift opts instead for what Latour calls 'infra-reflexivity':

the deflation of methodology and its replacement by style; self-exemplification rather than self-reference; being on the side of the known rather than on the side of the knowing; not being ashamed of weak explanations; working for equal relations between the represented and the representational; and automatically assuming transdisciplinarity (xi-xii).

Thus acknowledging the situatedness and partiality (both intentional and unintentional) of the researcher is an essential component of modest research. Haraway (1997: 16, original emphasis) offers a very useful metaphor for negotiating a route between objective and

subjective theories:

My invented category of semantics, *diffractions*, takes advantage of the optical metaphors and instruments that are so common in Western philosophy and science. Reflexivity ... like reflectivity, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up the worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real. Reflexivity is a bad trope for escaping the false choice between realism and relativism in thinking about strong objectivity and situated knowledges ... What we need is to make a difference in material-semiotic apparatuses, to diffract the rays of technoscience so that we get more promising interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies. Diffraction is an optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world.

Here, Haraway posits the idea that the researcher-writer is a lens or prism located between the researched subject area and the reader. The researcher-writer is therefore very present in the analysis but does not completely obscure the subject area, only diffracting it. This is counterposed to three things the researcher-writer can never be and should not try to be (but that have nevertheless characterised discourses of social science): a clear window that allows the reader to see the research subject area in full clarity; a mirror held at an angle so that one portion of the research subject area is shown undistorted to the reader; or an opaque block between the reader and the subject area, forcing the reader to learn only about the researcher-writer, their situation and their texts and nothing about the subject area.

Epistemologically, therefore, I believe we should step through the realism-relativism debate using Hammersley's subtle realism – an evidence-and-belief-based approach to 'truth' – and should borrow Haraway's diffraction metaphor to handle the objective-subjective binary: while there is 'real stuff out there', researchers are real too, positioned, partial and with a variety of potentially contradictory roles. The main implication of this epistemology for the thesis is that I am present in the text but I am not the purpose of the text. I have a political position – both a stance and a situation – and use that to attempt "to make a difference in the world" (ibid), however small that difference: ~ 8 ~ *Conclusions* draws out contributions to both academic and practitioner knowledges.

3.5.3 The Roles of the Researcher

Bauman, typically, captures the essence of the idea that researchers – and research encounters – are situated:

There is no supra-cultural and supra-historical land (so free from all contingency) or observation point from which the true and universal meaning can be sighted and subsequently portrayed. None of the partners in the encounter occupies such a point. (1999: xlviii)

He suggests that this understanding generates a "new task" for social science: "To understand, not to censure; to interpret, not to legislate; to abandon soliloquy for the sake of the dialogue" (ibid: xlix). We must accept not only that our knowledges are situated², but that this *matters* to

² There is a notable lack of debate about the spatiality of 'situations'. Where do they start and end? Which participant decides this? Do situations require interaction? Are they even contiguous?

research and the way it is performed. Though research is to some extent an 'encounter of partners', the partnership is not necessarily equal. We must be aware how our various roles as researchers affect the research encounters and findings, while avoiding excessive self-reflexivity. The following discussion addresses my position with the charity shop world and discusses my various researcher roles.

My professional involvement with charity shops began while employed as Research and Information Officer for the Charities Advisory Trust (CAT), a small charity that ostensibly exists to advise other charities on trading issues³. It produced advisory publications on the subject of charity trading and charity shops (such as Blume 1995, Framjee 1996) and in 1994 it set up the Charity Shops Group (CSG) as a simple, informal forum for charity shop Heads to share their experiences, problems and practices. In 1999 this Group became the Association of Charity Shops (ACS), independent from CAT, to ensure it was properly funded and free to meet the needs of its members.

My job included publishing research reports about charity shops (Goodall 1997a, Goodall and Blume 1997) and internal documents for the CSG (Goodall 1997b, 1998). I also helped co-ordinate CSG meetings, through minute-taking, writing the monthly Bulletin, helping organise member mailings, and so on. As criticism of charity shops reached a critical mass around 1996 and 1997 – based on the claims that the tax advantages of charity shops represented 'unfair competition' and that there were too many charity shops – I was involved in campaigning and lobbying by the CSG on behalf of the sector, through mobilising CSG members and MPs and contacting government officials. When I left CAT to undertake my full-time PhD, I continued to work for three days a week exclusively on CSG matters and began a research diary. I was involved in the transformation of the CSG into the independent Association of Charity Shops. My work for the CSG stopped at the end of the first year of the PhD, but my involvement with the sector continued through research and management consultancy projects for the independent ACS (e.g. Goodall 2001a), for Charity Finance magazine (Goodall 2000a, 2001b), and for individual charity shop organisations such as British Heart Foundation, Save the Children, Help the Aged, Shelter, British Red Cross and the Bromley Community Shop. This involvement with CAT, the CSG and the nascent ACS placed me in regular contact with charity shop Heads.

Through the fieldwork – both the interviews and the participant-observation case studies – I adopted or was ascribed certain roles, consciously or unconsciously. Seven distinct roles can be identified from the data, some given to me irrespective of my wishes, some deliberately and strategically adopted by me: unknowing but keen student, knowledgeable researcher, suspicious outsider, spy, priest, colleague and active participant.

³ 'Trading issues' includes charity shops, but selling donated goods does not, legally, constitute trading.

1. Unknowing but Keen Student

The main stance I adopted in the interviews was that of a 'student' who has a lot to learn about charity shop organising and was asking 'the experts'. This, I hoped, portrayed me as relatively non-threatening and indicated that they could and should do most of the talking, thereby generating more data for me. This was mostly successful, particularly at shop level, but it was sometimes undermined at Head level by my recognised role as 'knowledgeable researcher'.

2. Knowledgeable Researcher

To the Heads, even before the PhD, my role was primarily that of 'researcher', so the PhD reinforced rather than undermined this. But the interviewees' view of me as a knowledgeable researcher of the charity shops sector could undermine the role of 'unknowing student' I was trying to adopt. Danny Uptide was one Head who expressed this view of me:

I think we're probably going to come out better at the end of this year than most charity shops. Some people have had their rag sales set back REALLY hard, as you probably know better than I do.

Bobby Walker's desire to glean information from me was also fairly common:

We actually have a warehouse. I think a lot of charity shop chains don't have. And in fact that's something you can tell me more about. I will suck information from you later.

Three interviews ended with Heads asking *me* questions, not about the PhD but about the sector itself and my views of the future of charity shop performance. My existing role as a 'knowledgeable person' within the charity shop sector had the effect of reversing the roles of researcher and researched in these interviews and partially undermining the stance of receptive keen-to-learn student I wanted to adopt.

The sense that I was a knowledgeable researcher rather than a mere student in need of elucidation also developed because of the PhD process itself. The Heads knew I was interviewing a number of their fellow Heads and they assumed, correctly, that I was asking them the same questions. As the interview developed they therefore became aware that I was building a store of confidential knowledge about the sector. A number of them alluded to my other interviews in phrases like: 'Well, I don't know what the others have told you, but we ...'

The role of knowledgeable researcher was also ascribed to me at shop level in the participant-observation case studies. My research diary of the HospiShop case study, for example, records the following:

Rachel asks me what advice I can give the shop! I realise I have very little to offer, considering I'm meant to know about charity shops. I might know something about the organising of charity shop organisations, but I don't know that much about the running of charity shops as businesses, at least not enough to say anything sensible after being in the shop for ten minutes. I find myself mumbling something about a lick of paint and a new carpet!

3. Suspicious Outsider, or the Researcher as 'Stupid Git'

A variation on this was the 'suspicious outsider' role which was common at shop level if I did not spend much time in a shop (again in the participant-observation case studies). I was usually introduced as a 'researcher' or someone 'studying charity shops' and was often asked by the volunteers and staff what I was researching. Partly because I was recording a wide variety of things at that time and partly to avoid influencing their behaviour by identifying particular concerns, I tended to reply, 'I'm just here to learn how you run a charity shop!' This was an attempt to place myself firmly into the 'unknowing student' role. Sometimes this seemed to create distrust about why I was really there. In some shops I was treated as an outsider who should not be trusted, especially in London-based shops where distrust was more prevalent generally.

This distrust was also related to age and gender. In non-London shops the volunteers tended to be older females and I found it much easier to build rapport, using my own age, gender and the performance of 'charming young man'. However, in London-based shops, there were more young volunteers and more men. This increased the likelihood of my portrayal as a suspicious threat. A researcher can seem a dangerous presence when it is unclear to you what they are researching. I found this very difficult to overcome and in one case it led to conflict, with a white, male volunteer in his 30s calling me a 'stupid git' after I told him I'd finished the job I'd been given and was ready for something else. My keenness to work (see 'colleague' below) was read as an implicit critique of the general attitude of volunteers in this shop, where work seemed unimportant and even inconvenient to the more important task of social interaction. As volunteers without a paid manager, they felt able to both justify and get away with resisting the work ethic, and I was a dangerous or annoying challenge to that.

4. Spy

The very negative ascribed role of 'spy' was a stronger version of 'suspicious researcher'. This occurred at shop level and with middle management and paid staff at head office during the participant-observation case studies. My research access was usually handled directly through the Head and this generated suspicions that I might be 'keeping an eye' on the shop, volunteer or staff member and would 'report back' to the Head. In each participant-observation case study I offered a strict confidentiality agreement to the organisation, but because this was negotiated with the Head, those in the rest of the organisation did not know about it. I had constantly to re-negotiate and reassure everyone I met about the confidential nature of the research, but the issue of trust was again pertinent. Even those that heard me assure confidentiality could not be sure exactly what that entailed and still remained suspicious of me. On one occasion, a staff member made a joke to another staff member about me spying, which resulted in the latter treating me extremely suspiciously all day, as though there might have been truth in the joke. My research diary from HospiShop records:

As we drive to the shop, Mike tells me that he often catches Margaret smoking even though she is not meant to. When we get there he introduces me to Margaret as "a researcher" and then says: "He's here to keep an eye on you, watch you sitting smoking!" He laughed and left, but I spent the rest of the day trying to build trust with Margaret, through lively 'trustable' rapport and a direct comment that I was not there to spy on her. I'm pretty sure she modified her behaviour because of me - she was certainly gagging for a fag by lunch-time.

5. Priest

Confidentiality within organisations is thus as important as confidentiality between an organisation and the outside world. However, once confidentiality was assured and believed by staff members, the results were often extremely useful. During an informal talk with a senior manager in the ShopsCom case study, he talked at length about his disappointment in the organisation and the way it was run. This substantially developed my thinking about the particular discourses of professionalism prevalent in ShopsCom. He felt very unappreciated and talked so much that I hardly said a thing for half an hour. As well as being good data for me, the research diary shows that he found this a great release:

After being brutally honest with me, and criticising ShopsCom and its boss, Peter said the chat had been "so cathartic! You're like a priest!"

This man left the organisation within six months of our chat. It is of course difficult to know whether I affected this decision by facilitating his earlier articulation of his unhappiness with the organisation, but it is a reminder that research is itself always productive social interaction with unintended and possibly unidentifiable effects well beyond the research itself.

6. Colleague

An important role that I tried to adopt during much of the participant-observation work, especially at shop level, was 'colleague'. I wanted to genuinely participate, to work alongside others. Again there is a good example of this in my HospiShop research diary:

*[In a shop]
Once the Head of shops leaves, the first thing Helen asks is: "What would you like to do?" It seems I must 'do' something. I can't 'do' research if this just involves sitting observing other people work. You certainly can't do that in a charity shop! So I say "anything". They ask what I've done before - I say steaming, hanging, a little sorting and pricing. I stressed I was most interested in "learning what you would do on a normal day". Lila and Helen looked at each other as though to ask "We don't have to look after researchers on a normal day!" Avoiding my remark about normal days, Lila asked if I'd like to help do the pricing and I said "I'd love to learn", jumping at the chance to be a participant as well as an observer.*

Participant-observation necessitates participating if we are to appear as accountable human beings in interaction, in a Garfinkelian sense. Sometimes, though, it was harder to become a 'colleague'. During a day in one of VolShop's shop I offered to make a round of teas for the volunteer team, but two older ladies competed with each other to make one for me. I didn't really want a cup of tea. I had only offered to make tea in order to start becoming 'one of them' for the day. But instead they reinscribed my 'visitor' role upon me: "You can't make tea! You're the guest!" Ethel exclaimed, laughing at my folly.

7. Active Participant

The final role is related to 'colleague', but definitely different to it. This arises from the fact that our presence necessarily affects the organisation. As with footballers flagged off-side despite not having the ball, there is no such thing as "not interfering with play". Unlike intentionally trying to be a 'colleague' and helping the charity iron a few more clothes or sort an extra sack, one often has most effect as an active participant *unintentionally*. Referring to research as 'translation', Bauman notes:

Translation is an ongoing, unfinished and inconclusive dialogue which is bound to remain such ... The act of translation is not a one-off event which will put paid to the need of further translating effort ... No act of translation leaves either of the partners intact. Both emerge from their encounter changed ... and that reciprocal change is the work of translation" (1999: xlviii).

One example of my unintentional interference occurred in HospiShop:

Today Susan turned up with new signs for volunteers - "Remember to always give a receipt" and customers "Always wait for and expect a receipt". She told me she had decided to do this after asking me yesterday about the differences between her small chain of shops and ShopsCom, which I had researched the previous month. I had described one of ShopsCom's procedures, but called it rather paranoid. Yet here is Susan deliberately introducing the same measures, because I'd mentioned them to her! Material practices are spread by me like bacteria by a rat! I felt a bit uncomfortable with this at first, but I'm feeling happier about it now [written that evening]. There's nothing 'unnatural' about me or about my influence.

To conclude this discussion of the roles of the researcher, I wish to address the issue of distance. Fetterman shows that participant observation "combines participating in the lives of the people under study with the maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data" (1989: 45). Rather than being in danger of 'going native' through my research, I was in some ways native beforehand. One challenge, therefore, was to *develop* a professional distance, to denaturalise myself to the charity shops sector and to resensitise myself to assumptions and mundane practices that I might have taken for granted. I feel this was relatively easy because my involvement with the sector before the PhD was only one year, whereas my involvement with it through the PhD (as well as outside it) has been for

four years. Because I have deliberately ensured that people in the sector are aware of my 'academic location' (I often mention my PhD) I have been able to maintain a critical distance from the sector and have, indeed, deliberately built 'critique' into my non-PhD work. In presenting the *Charity Finance* Charity Shop Surveys to the Annual Conference of the ACS, for example, I made a point of using my 'researcher role' to associate myself with a certain 'expert neutrality' (Goodall 2000b, 2001c) that allowed me to offer open criticism of some charity shop organising practices.

I have my own particular stance on issues of charity shop organising, which has developed through the research project itself. As stated in the introductory chapter, my interpretation of the data leads me to suggest that the charity shop professionalisation process has reached its limits and that continued professionalisation of the traditional, dominant variety, could damage charity shops. I am very open to alternative positions, given the evidence. More important, however, is my theoretical position: that the professionalisation process has been as much a matter of Heads' identities and identification processed as of rational business decision-making. This thesis might be unpopular amongst charity shop Heads, for their 'manager myths' (Hales 1986) stress the rationality of management. However, I have stressed to those working in the sector who have asked about my research that the PhD is more than a policy-oriented thesis. Whilst it does have insight for policy-makers, I engage with theoretical issues and write primarily for an academic audience. Hammersley notes that a key criterion for judging research is relevance and that practitioners are one of the audiences who are entitled to express an opinion on the relevance of a piece of research. But, he continues, practitioners often accuse academic research of being irrelevant or a misrepresentation. This, he suggests is usually due to their unrealistic expectations that research will produce prescriptive rules (1992: 73-74). I have deliberately tried to ensure that the charity shop practitioners met during the research have realistic expectations of the outcomes of the PhD, which has therefore positioned me in a particular 'academic' role.

In summary, I strategically adopted (or attempted to adopt) some roles to help me perform the research and was ascribed other roles by those I researched. These sometimes undermined my intended strategic roles, but were always instructive, even in the one situation of minor conflict.

Context: The Professionalisation of Charity Shops

4.1 Professionalisation By Numbers

Danny Updike: If you're competing in charity retail now, you've got to have capital. You cannot do it for two grand and a lick of paint. You've got to have some money.

This final resource contextualises the thesis within a story of charity shop professionalisation and growth – an important narrative generated and used by charity shop Heads. The chapter offers a quantitative overview of the recent history of the charity shops sector, collating data from three sources about the sector's size, growth and historical performance. Although we look back as far as the nineteenth century, most data is taken from the mid 1980s to the present day. To the Heads of charity shops, this data is very meaningful and indeed they have called for its production within their own organisations and have co-operated with researchers to make it available to others. This overview also offers a crash course in some of the key aspects of charity shop organising.

The chapter details the so-called 'professionalisation' process in charity shops: a transformation from entirely voluntary local initiatives only one step removed from a jumble sale into large, centralised chains of retail outlets with paid managers and significant overheads. The collection and generation of donated goods, the increase in paid staff, the move to larger and busier high street locations, and increasingly sophisticated shopfits, have all required increased expenditure. It was hoped this would increase profits as well as sales and it did for some time, but not the 1990s when much of this expenditure failed to create a step change in profit levels, leaving charity shops vulnerable to falling sales at the same time as the charity shop market became saturated and discount private sector retailers emerged as a major competitive threat. The process of increasing expenditure is almost universally referred to as 'professionalisation'.

There are three main published sources of quantitative data about charity shops: charities' annual reports, retailing reports (CIRPL 1992, Mintel 1999), and the Annual Charity Shops

Survey (Barker and Harker 1992, Harker 1993, Phelan 1994, Gillingham and Phelan 1995, Phelan 1996, Phelan 1997, Phelan, Lamont & Howley 1998, Phelan & Goodall 1999, Goodall 2000b, Goodall 2001b). Annual reports are rarely useful because, although identifying retail activities as one source of income, they generally fail to distinguish the costs incurred specifically by the shops operation. Of the two retailing research reports, *Charity Shops in the UK* (CIRPL 1992) is the more useful, providing basic information on the history of the charity shop sector and surveying contemporary practices in relation to shop locations, retail formats, corporate style, merchandise, advertising and marketing, customers, staffing, and likely future developments. It also estimates the total size of the charity shop sector in 1991 and profiles individual charity shop organisations. *The Charity Shops Sector* (Intel 1999) is mainly a summary of data compiled by the Annual Charity Shops Survey and is of little value. The Annual Charity Shops Survey (CSS) is published in *Charity Finance* magazine, formerly *NGO Finance*. In 1992, Barker and Harker tried analysing charity shop performance using charities' annual reports. Because these offered incomplete and non-comparable data, in 1993 they undertook a survey for the magazine. This has since been repeated annually. A questionnaire is sent to charities thought to run shops and the returned data is published with commentary in the magazine. The survey sample has increased from 26 charities running 2,760 shops (1993) to 105 charities running 6,256 shops (2001), representing both growth in the total number of charities running shops and the increased credibility of the CSS report.

This overview, combining data from the CSS (from 1992 to 2001) and the Corporate Intelligence research report (before 1993), is abbreviated from a fuller account published elsewhere (Goodall, forthcoming; see also Goodall 2000a, 2001b). It examines the professionalisation process through four key aspects of charity shop organising: shop numbers (4.2), turnover, costs and profit (4.3), staff and volunteers (4.4), and stock (4.5).

Very little data exists on the look of the shop – expenditure on shopfitting and rent, for example. While there is therefore no section for this, it must be stressed that the 'look' of the shop was one of the key aspects of charity shop professionalisation, as Gregson *et al* (2002: 6) also argue. As discussed in ~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors*, the attempt by Heads to differentiate their charity shops from other charities' shops is related to the personal identities of charity shop Heads (see 6.3.3). But it is enormously difficult to achieve this differentiation through the product, because most is donated. Therefore the presentational aspects of the shops have been the particular focus of many professionalisation projects. Danny Updike who started this chapter believed you now need money. Susan of HospiShop would disagree. This thesis demonstrates that the professionalisation process has been and is being contested. This chapter, however, focuses on the dominant process of professionalisation.

4.2 Shop Numbers

One of the implicit sub-texts of professionalisation is the desirability of growth. The total number of UK charity shops increased every year from 1948 until 2000, but fell for the first time in year 2000-01. This section offers a two part history of the growth and current decline in shop numbers, based on data availability: from 1948 to 1989 there is very little data, from 1989 to 2001 there is much more.

4.2.1 The Early Years, 1948 to 1989

Table 4.1 shows the dates when individual charity shop organisations were first established. Although as comprehensive as possible, it covers only 34 of the 300 charities estimated to be currently running shops.

The Salvation Army ran charity shops in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mainly to make very cheap clothing available to 'the poor' who were identified by William Booth's pioneering surveys. These 'community stores' were not intended to make profits for the charity, but rather to help the organisation fulfil its aims of helping people out of poverty. Charity shops are primarily a post-World War II phenomenon, however. Their modern genesis in fact owes something to the war itself. Oxfam's first charity shop, set up in 1948 in Oxford, is often viewed as the first 'modern' charity shop. It was established when Oxfam found itself with a huge surplus of donated clothes and blankets intended for the direct use of people in Greece, who had suffered as a result of the recent Nazi occupation and Allied naval blockade. Oxfam was set up specifically to provide famine relief in this situation. Unable to use all the in-kind donations it received, Oxfam decided to sell them and thereby convert them to cash, thus helping its beneficiaries in other ways (Oxfam 2001a, 2001b). This is the fundamental principle underlying most contemporary charity shops. Oxfam's 'first move' is one of the main reasons for its significant presence in the charity shop market today, and the reason why "the Oxfam shop" was the generic name for charity shops for many years.

Only a handful of charities ran shops before 1970. Local fundraising groups of The Sue Ryder Foundation began setting up shops in the 1950s and both Save the Children and the Children's Society began shops in the 1960s. But even Oxfam still had only four shops by the late 1960s. Helping Hand Charity Shops Ltd also began in the 1960s. So far it is the only major chain of charity shops that has 'failed,' or completely dissolved itself. Anecdotal comments and the CIRPL report suggest that it was not in fact a charity, but rather ran 'charity' shops as a private limited company, making donations to various charities out of the profits. It is not known whether or not all of its profits were applied to charitable purposes. Its portfolio of shops was sold to Marie Curie Cancer Care, now one of the top twenty charity shop chains. Seven

organisations began their shop operations in the 1970s, the first five of which are now large and established names. The late 1970s also witnessed rapid growth in Oxfam's shops.

Table 4.1 Establishment of Charity Shop Operations

Charity shop operation	Year established
Salvation Army	19th Century
Oxfam *	1948
Sue Ryder *	1950s
Children's Society	1960s
Save the Children	mid 1960s
Helping Hands	1966
British Red Cross *	1970
Minds Matter	1970
Scope *	1971
Shelter	1972
Barnardo's *	1974
Mental Health Foundation	1976
International Children's Trust	1977
Church Army	1982
Imperial Cancer Research Fund *	1982
Cancer Research Campaign *	early 1980s
National Children's Homes	1983
RSPCA	1983
Age Concern *	1984
Help the Aged *	1984
PDSA	1984
Abbeyfield Society	1980s
Action Aid	1980s
British Heart Foundation *	1986
ASBAH	1987
British Sailors Society	1987
Sense	1987
St Christopher's Hospice	1987
Tenovus	1987
Chest. Heart. Stroke Association	late 1980s
Action Cancer	1988
RSSPCC	1989
Scottish Scope	1990
Wythall Animal Sanctuary	1990

(*) indicates very large charities (200+ shops) in 2001.

Colour coded into decades by start date.

Sources: CIRPL 1992, Goodall 2001c

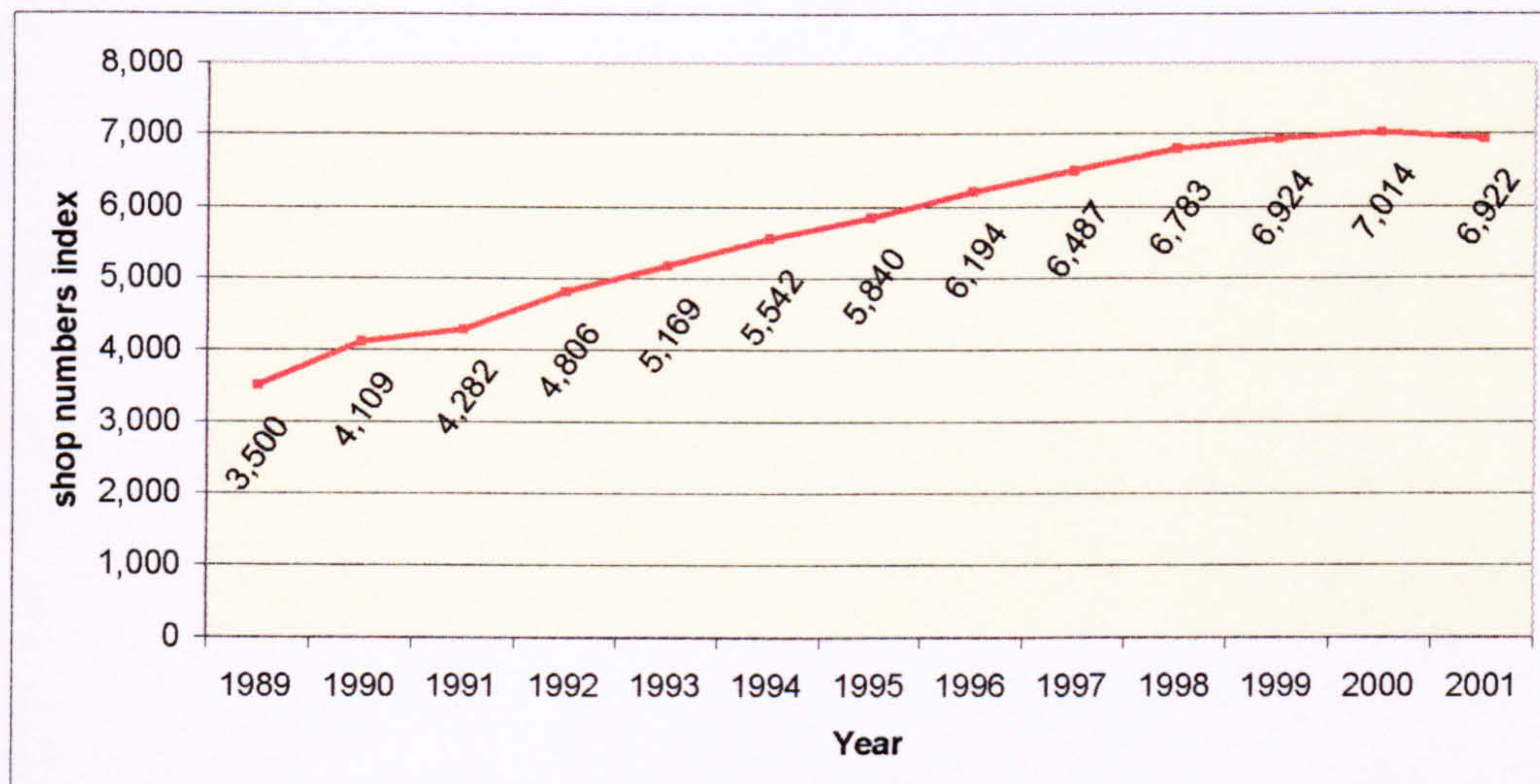
The 1980s saw massive growth by the charities that today run the largest chains of shops. Five of the top ten charity shop operations in 2001 began their shop operations before 1980; the remaining five were established between 1982 and 1986. Charities entering the market after this point have been unable to grow to the same size. The 1980s also saw changes in the nature of charity shops, particularly their staffing, locations, goods for sale, and visual look.

4.2.2 The Later Years, 1989 to 2001

If the 1980s were about growth and early professionalisation, the 1990s were about accelerated professionalisation in the shops and formalisation in the sector: the 1992 CIRPL report, the Charity Shops Surveys, and the 1994 establishment of the Charity Shops Group (later transformed into the Association of Charity Shops). The 1990s also witnessed further growth in

both shop numbers and, particularly, the number of newly established charity shop operations. But the 1990s concluded with the end of shop number growth.

Figure 4.1 Change in charity shop numbers, 1989 to 2001



sources: CIRPL 1992, Barker and Harker 1992, Harker 1993, Phelan 1994, Gillingham and Phelan 1995, Phelan 1996, Phelan 1997, Phelan, Lamont & Howley 1998, Phelan & Goodall 1999, Goodall 2000a, Goodall 2001b

Figure 4.1 gives estimates of the size of the total charity shops sector from 1989 to 2001 based on data shown in Appendix D. It shows fairly steady growth in charity shop numbers until around 1997, when growth began to slow, eventually turning into decline in 2001, the first year of shrinkage in the history of charity shops. This reflected the financial crisis faced by many charity shop organisations from 1998. The next section will show that both turnover and profit per shop fell from 1998, leading charity shop Heads to order the closure of record numbers of loss-making or just-profitable shops in an attempt to rationalise their shop portfolios and limit the drop in total gross profit. Heads are not immune to 'rational business decision-making', therefore, and that is not the argument of the thesis. But no activities should be seen *uniquely* as rational business decision-making, empty of socio-cultural content. Identities I will argue have been a crucial element both in professionalisation and in responses to the downturn in charity shop performance.

A good example of this relates to shop numbers. The 1999 CSS showed very poor financial performance for the sector, as the next section illustrates. Yet whilst charity shop Heads felt the size of the sector and market saturation was the main cause of this downturn, many of them expected to increase the size of their own shops operations in 1999-2000. The respondents expected to increase their shop numbers by 154 and decrease them by only 35, a net increase of 119 shops. They all seemed to know that there was no room left in the market, but for some reason they all still hoped there was a little space left for continued expansion of their own shop operation. Very few of them were able to realise these hopes, however. The 2000 CSS showed that, while 189 shops were opened, 126 were shut, a net increase of only 63 shops,

half the 119 predicted by Heads a year earlier. The year after that a staggering 243 charity shops were shut and only 187 were opened, a net closure of 56 shops.

Early indications from confidential data (Goodall 2001a) suggest that this one-year decline in shop numbers is not a 'one-off' but rather the start of a longer term trend in shop numbers. Although that data also shows strong growth in turnover, it is likely that the charity shops sector will see declining or stable shop numbers for a good few years. In their talk about the current state of the sector, charity shop Heads indicate that "consolidation" is the strategy of the moment.

4.2.3 The Number of Charities Running Shops

Increases in shop numbers have come from two separate but related trends: charities already running shops have opened more of them and charities not running shops have decided to join the movement. In the first 46 years of charity shop history (1948 to 1993), around 95 charities began a shops operation. Over the next eight years (1993 to 2000) over 200 charities began a shops operation. The number of charity shop organisations therefore tripled over this period as charities rushed to share in the success of the charity shop boom. Almost all of the new charity shop organisations have remained small, partly because they entered the market later but also because the majority are hospice charities that adhere to an unwritten agreement to run shops only within the geographical boundaries of their own medical referral areas.

5,200 actual shops were opened during the first period (1948 to 1993) compared with 1,800 during the second period (1993 to 2000). An average of 113 new charity shops and 2 new charity shop organisations were established each year during the first period, compared with 225 new shops and 25 new organisations each year over the second period. The 1990s were therefore characterised by rapid growth in shop numbers *and* by a very large number of charities entering the charity shop market with a small number of shops.

Table 4.2 Number of charities running shops, by size of chain, 2001

Charity size (number of shops)	Number of charities of this size	Number (and %) of shops run by charities in this category
"very small" (1 to 9)	50	229 (4%)
"small" (10 to 19)	24	314 (5%)
"medium" (20 to 49)	12	367 (6%)
"large" (50 to 199)	9	1,087 (17%)
"very large" (200+)	10	4,259 (68%)
Total	105	6,256 (100%)

source: adapted from Goodall 2001b

Today the charity shops sector contains organisations of many different sizes. Table 4.2 categorises charities that run shops into five bands based on the number of shops they each

run. It shows how many charities fall into each category and the combined total (and proportion) of shops run by charities in this band (Goodall 2001b). Nearly half of the sample consists of very small charity shop organisations running fewer than ten shops, but between them they account for less than 4% of all charity shops in the survey. Conversely, although there are only ten “very large” charity shop chains, between them they run over two thirds of the charity shops in the sample. The data in Table 4.2 are from the 2001 CSS sample so do not cover the whole sector. All medium, large and very large UK charity shop organisations are included in the sample and therefore this table. The other 200 charity shop organisations are all small or very small, and between them run about 670 shops.

The dominance of the large organisations is a testament to the material success of their professionalisation processes. But the end of shop number growth questions the future usefulness of this process, at least as it has so far been conceived. In conclusion, shop numbers reveal a history of rapid growth based on significant success, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, followed by falling growth and eventually shrinkage in 2000-01. The rapid growth was a major cause of a financial crisis the sector, and the eventual shrinkage was a response to that crisis, as the next section demonstrates.

4.3 Financial data

4.3.1 Measuring Performance

Three main pieces of information demonstrate the financial performance of charity shops – turnover, costs and profit. Extrapolating from the most recent data (Goodall 2001b) to the figure of 6,922 charity shops nationally indicates that the sector has a total turnover of £422m generated through expenditure of £344m, leaving a total gross profit of £78m.

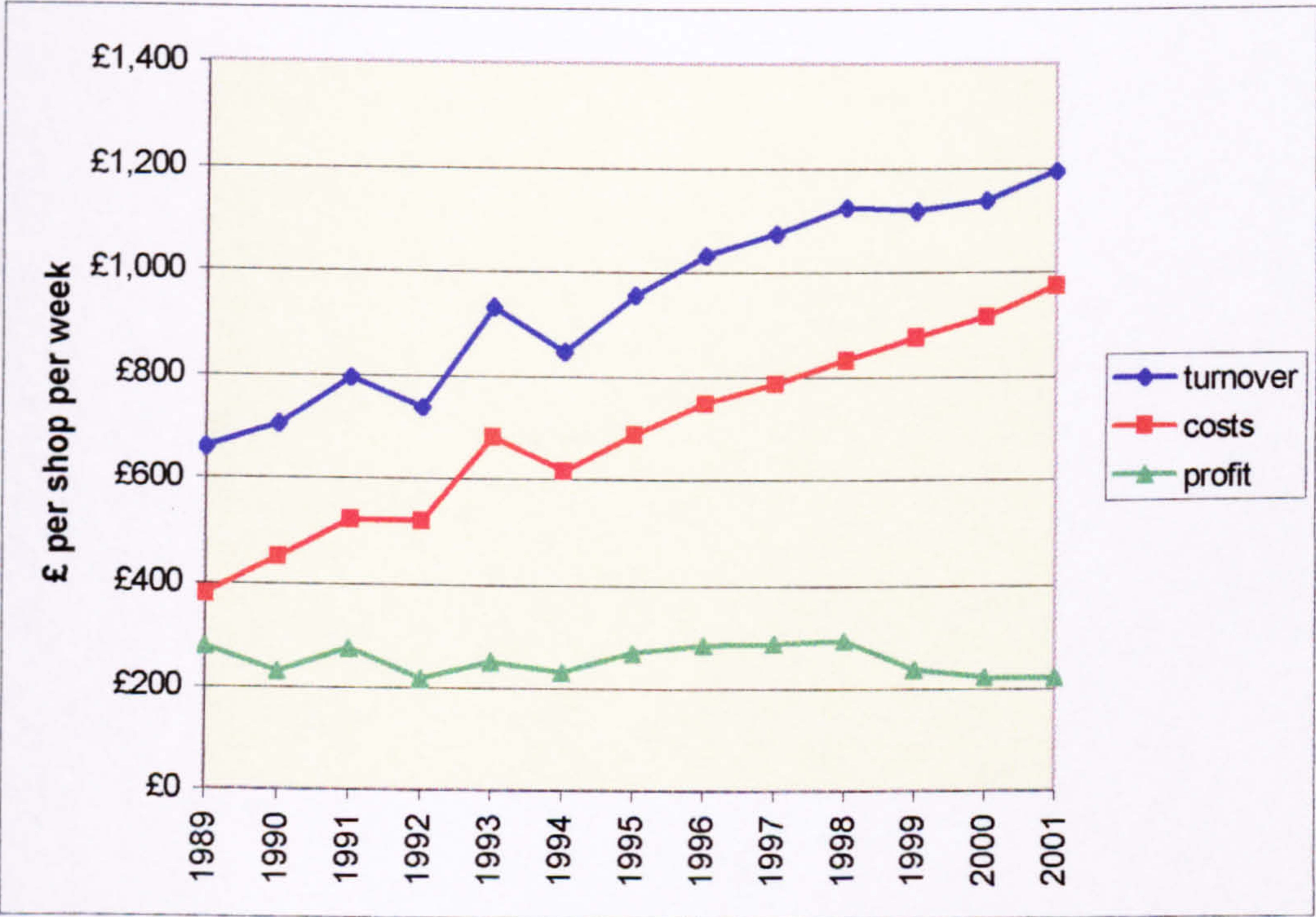
These three pieces of information can produce four important figures that are used in the CSS and that, I believe, allow for the most accurate analysis of the performance of charity shop organisations. First, turnover per shop per week is calculated by dividing the total annual income from all the shops in the sample (whether 'the sample' is all the shops of one charity, or the whole sector) by the total number of weeks that these shops traded. Second, costs per shop per week is calculated by dividing the total annual costs from all sources from all the shops in the sample by the total number of weeks that these shops traded. Third, (gross) profit per shop per week is calculated by subtracting total annual costs from total annual income for all shops in the sample, to give total annual profit. This is then divided by the total number of weeks that these shops traded, as for turnover and costs. Fourth, profit as a percent of turnover is the relationship between turnover and gross profit. It is calculated by dividing the total turnover of the shops in the sample by their total profit and is given as a percentage. It is sometimes referred to as 'profit margin' or 'profitability'. It is also 'the amount of money that goes to charity', in crude terms at least. (A figure of 19% would indicate, crudely, that 19 pence of every pound spent in the shops is profit and goes directly to help the charity. Things are not that simple, however. Investment and depreciation practices affect the actual sum covenanted to the charity each year.)

Figure 4.2 shows the average weekly turnover, costs and profit per shop for the whole sector between 1989 and 2001, excluding inflation, based on a changing sample. On average, charities have managed to take more money from their shops year after year, increasing weekly shops turnover 81%, from £659 to £1,194, over the full eleven year period. Yet costs have risen even faster, 156%, from £381 to £974 per shop per week over the same period. Therefore the overall pattern for profit is static or downwards. In 2001, profit per shop per week was £220, or 21% lower than the £278 made in 1989. Despite (or maybe because of) all the 'improvements' in charity shops, the average shop makes less weekly profit in 2001 than it did eleven years ago.

The relationship between turnover and costs is at the crux of current debates about the business of charity shops. On one side is the argument that 'investment' in shopfits, paid staff, collecting donated goods from households, and bought-in new goods, is the only way to

increase turnover. The converse argument is that after a certain level, investing in such 'improvements' ultimately fails to increase profits, because the extra turnover generated only, at best, covers the cost of the improvements. Figure 4.2 is evidence in support of the latter argument, suggesting that over the last decade, increases in spending have not led to concomitant increases in turnover and have therefore failed to improve profit.

Figure 4.2 Turnover, cost and profit per shop per week, 1989 to 2001



sources: as Figure 4.1

The exception to this is 1994 to 1998, when turnover increased at a faster rate than costs. Profits show quite strong growth over this period, up 27% from £231 to £293 (or 6.8% per year, excluding inflation). But in a single year, 1998 to 1999, profits fell back 19% to £238 and the next year, 1999 to 2000, they fell to £220 which is below the 1994 level and only £3 higher than the lowest ever weekly profit (in 1992). Profits stabilised between 2000 and 2001 because turnover grew fairly strongly, in line with cost growth. Confidential data for the financial year 2001 to 2002 shows turnover growing strongly (Goodall 2001a). If costs can be controlled then profits may begin to climb, but this is by no means certain.

4.3.2 Understanding the Charity Shop Downturn

According to charity shop Heads themselves, there were three main reasons for the very difficult trading conditions between 1998 and 2001: a saturated charity shop market, intense competition from discount retailers, and a collapse in the rag price. There is a sense that the charity shop sector has a maximum size, at least in the current format. Only so many traditional

charity shops can profitably exist, because of the limited markets for customers, for unwanted goods, for shop sites and for volunteers. There is little doubt that some of these markets have reached saturation. The 1999 Charity Shops Survey included a litany of comments about saturation, characterising 1999 as an "annus horribilis", a "dreadful, terrible and desperate" year (Goodall & Phelan 1999: 20). Mick Nolan, management accountant at Mind Matters, commented, "It seems the expansion of the last few years has finally reached saturation point – it will be more and more difficult to increase profits" (ibid: 29) and his comments were echoed by Pat White of Notting Hill Housing Trust and Eamonn McKee of Action Cancer in Belfast, amongst others.

Figure 4.3 A New Competitive Threat for Charity Shops, *The Times*, 07-VII-99



There are two main effects of a surfeit of charity shops, beyond the shortage of custom: shortages of stock and volunteers. The larger organisations are generally harder hit by both of these. Hospice charities tend to receive higher support from their local community and they also benefit from the estates of their deceased clients: bereaved relatives, grateful for the compassion and care that their loved ones received during their terminal illness, are pleased to offer the hospice the clothes, books, bric-a-brac and furniture that are no longer required. The larger chains must actively seek out stock by embarking on house-to-house collections, establishing textile banks or buying in new goods to sell, all with their own cost implications.

A shortage of volunteers can, at worst, mean shops not being opened, which is very costly. Even if the shop door is open and someone is on the till, there may be no-one to sort and prepare the donated stock, which decimates sales. Paid staff are able to ensure the shop is open when it should be and are ostensibly easier to manage because of the employment contract, but of course they cost money in both salaries and management time.

The second reason for the charity shop downturn from 1998-2001 was the massive growth of discount retailers such as Matalan, Peacocks, TKMaxx, and Primark (Figure 4.3). These have aggressively targeted the same customers that charity shops rely upon and they sell some new clothes cheaper than charity shops are able to sell second-hand goods. In addition, the generally lower quality and less hard-wearing clothes sold by these discount retailers has lead to a reduction in the quality and quantity of donated stock passed to charity shops, with discernible effects on the amount of sellable charity shop stock and the prices that charity shops can charge.

The third reason for the 1998-2001 downturn was a collapse in the price paid by commercial textile recyclers for the 'rag' that charity shops generate. Only a proportion of the clothing donated to charity shops is suitable for resale, and only some of that will actually find a buyer. Unsaleable and unsold stock is usually sold instead to a commercial textile recycler. In October 1998, the typical rag price was 13.9 pence/kg. By August 2000 this had fallen to just 6.5 pence/kg (Goodall 2001a: 13). This had a big impact on charity shop income. For example, the total profits of Shelter's shops halved from 1999 to 2000, from £783k to £391k. A quarter of that fall (£100k) was the direct result of the lower rag price (Goodall 2000b). Table 4.3 shows the average weekly shop income from rag for the past four years. There are signs that the price for waste textiles is rising again, but charity shops have learnt the hard way never to rely on rag income.

Table 4.3 Rag Income, 1998 to 2001

Year	Average rag income per shop per week
1998	£48.86
1999	£54.95
2000	£43.26
2001	£36.10

sources: Goodall 2000a, Goodall 2001b, Phelan et al 1998, Phelan & Goodall 1999

From 1998 to 2001, therefore, three factors contributed to the charity shops downturn. The downturn seriously affected some charities. Scope, in particular, derives 60% of its income from charity shops and its drop in profits led the charity to start saying 'No' to certain activities for people with Cerebral Palsy that it had previously undertaken (see Figure 4.4). Oxfam was also badly hit. A Guardian article cites shop volunteers discussing a "crisis" and compares this with the £75,000 salary offered to the charity's director. Saturation of the charity shop market compared with increased competition in private sector retailing are blamed by Oxfam's

spokeswoman (Figure 4.5). The downturn must therefore be understood as a major crisis in charity shops, hitting the larger charities particularly hard, as the next sub-section shows.

Figure 4.4 Effect of the Charity Shop Downturn on Scope, *The Guardian*, 22-XI-00

Guardian Society Wednesday November 22 2000 5

As shop profits plummet, Scope takes stock and refocuses attention on four priority areas

Five-year plan for cerebral palsy charity

reported last week, Oxfam is restructuring after its shop profits halved in two years.

Scope's shop profits, measured before taking account of central overheads, have plummeted from £6.8m in 1997-98 to £2.6m last year. The charity as a whole recorded deficits of £2.7m in 1998-99 and £800,000 last year — a figure cushioned by substantial legacy income.

Brewster reflects ruefully that the downturn came just as the charity was embarking on a fundamental review of what it was — and was not — doing to help people with cerebral palsy (CP). "The number of things we can do goes nowhere near meeting the needs," he says, "and therefore the thing that Scope finds most difficult is saying no."

But say no it will. Future work is to focus on four priority areas: support for children newly diagnosed with CP, education support for children and young people with CP; support for disabled people to

charity's "schools for parents" may close; and grant giving to individuals will cease.

Set against this, new developments will include creation of new teams, initially five, to build relations with health and social services. The aim is for Scope, within five years, to be in touch with all children with CP, compared to just half at present.

Net job losses are likely to amount to 65-70, or 80 if the schools for parents do not survive. Ten of the charity's 314 charity shops have already closed and 10 more are expected to follow. But sales are rising again and Brewster says morale among shop staff is on a "huge high".

In the sense of the proverbial ill wind, would Scope have refocused its work in the same way but for the nosedive in shop income? "We would have had the new goals," says Brewster, "but whether they would have been so sharp is an interesting question."

while additionally adjusting for the slump in shop profits, Brewster says Scope will have to "cut into some of the real flesh". About £1m is to come out of overheads through reorganisation; the existing structure of 13 generic community or "partnership" teams will be wound up; four of the

obtain and retain work; and support for disabled adults in daily living. Within each of the four, further priority will go to those facing the greatest inequality, whether by severity of impairment, poverty or race.

To release funds for this work,

High priority: learning computer skills at one of Scope's day services



David Brindle

Scope, the cerebral palsy charity, is the latest voluntary organisation to announce cuts after a collapse of income from its high street shops. The charity aims to reduce its spending next year by almost £4m.

Simultaneously, though, Scope is refocusing and sharpening its agenda. For the first time, it will have clear and quantified five-year goals for expansion of services in priority areas of work.

The result is something of a paradox. "The next two or three months are going to be pretty painful," admits Richard Brewster, the charity's chief executive. On the other hand, he says, because of the new agenda "the sense of release of energy is palpable".

The sharp downturn in the fortunes of most charity shops has been ascribed variously to higher costs, greater competition and the arrival of budget clothing chains such as Matalan. As Society

Figure 4.5 "Trouble In Store": Charity Shop Downturn hits Oxfam, *The Guardian*, 15-XI-00

Shop-floor review: a drop in sales means that 850 Oxfam stores are facing job losses Photograph: Bill Stephenson

The Oxfam shop is a landmark of the British high street and a steady source of clothing both for the poor and the more eclectic trendsetters. But fierce competition among retailers, and the apparent failure of the charity's retail strategy, has left the shops facing a financial crisis.

Despite subsidised business rates, donated goods and an army of volunteer staff, Britain's most famous charity shop chain is haemorrhaging profits. A radical review of the 850 stores will lead to cost cutting and job losses.

The main reason for plunging profits is higher costs, such as Oxfam's decision to professionalise shop management two years ago by hiring some 500 paid managers to replace volunteers at the busiest outlets. Whether by bad luck or bad planning, this occurred just as the retail sector was toppling into a slump.

Details of the current crisis were passed to *Society* by Oxfam volunteers, following the recent controversy in the letters columns over the salary on offer (£75,000) for a new director of the charity. Internal documents show that an internal trading review found that, while overall turnover of the shops had remained constant at £60m, profits passed on for aid projects had fallen from £16.5m in 1997-98 to an estimated £7.6m this year and, if no action were taken, a projected £3.7m in 2003-04.

One volunteer wrote telling *Society*: "Our costs have spiralled out of control, so much so that Oxfam is in the middle of a crisis. They'll be mak-

ing large numbers of employees redundant and closing offices all over the country." The problems had been developing over the past four years, she said, during which time director David Bryer had received salary increases worth at least £25,000.

Another Oxfam volunteer claimed that Bryer had presided over a culture of rising costs, with the result that less than 20p of every £1 earned in Oxfam shops was going to aid projects. The correspondent wrote: "This is a great charity, to which I have always been deeply attached and worked for as a volunteer for 10 years. I am very distressed to see the growth of bureaucracy and lack of financial control that has gone on now for a number of years."

Oxfam is rejecting any suggestion of lax management. Spokeswoman Alison Woodhead says that, despite the shops' problems, the charity last year increased the overall sums sent overseas to £87m, compared to £70m in each of the two previous years.

Bryer's pay boost was agreed following a review of pay and benefits, which found that Oxfam needed to increase salaries. "Even at £75,000, the director's salary is 40% less than for a similar sized commercial organisation and is in line with that paid at other charities," says Woodhead.

Oxfam blames the shops' troubles on increased competition in retailing, illustrated by the difficulties of commercial chains such as C&A and Marks & Spencer. The total number of charity shops, meanwhile, has doubled in the past decade.

Sarah Shekleton, manager of the trading review, says it is specifically upheaval in the clothing market that

has hit profits, as clothing represents half the shops' business. The remainder, mainly trade in books and bric-a-brac, has held up well. Costs have increased, she says, because of higher rents on the high street and because Oxfam invested in new staff and activities shortly before the market downturn.

"For example, we took on people to help open new shops, but then didn't open as many as we'd expected, and we invested in new activities across departments — including extra support for our Fair Trade business," Shekleton says. Profit margins are inevitably affected by the charity's Fair Trade activities, by which it sells new goods made by third world producers. "If we just sold donated goods, the shops would make more."

The charity is not reversing its decision to use paid managers, which have added £3m a year to costs. "We still believe the combination of paid managers and volunteers works best in our busier shops," says Shekleton.

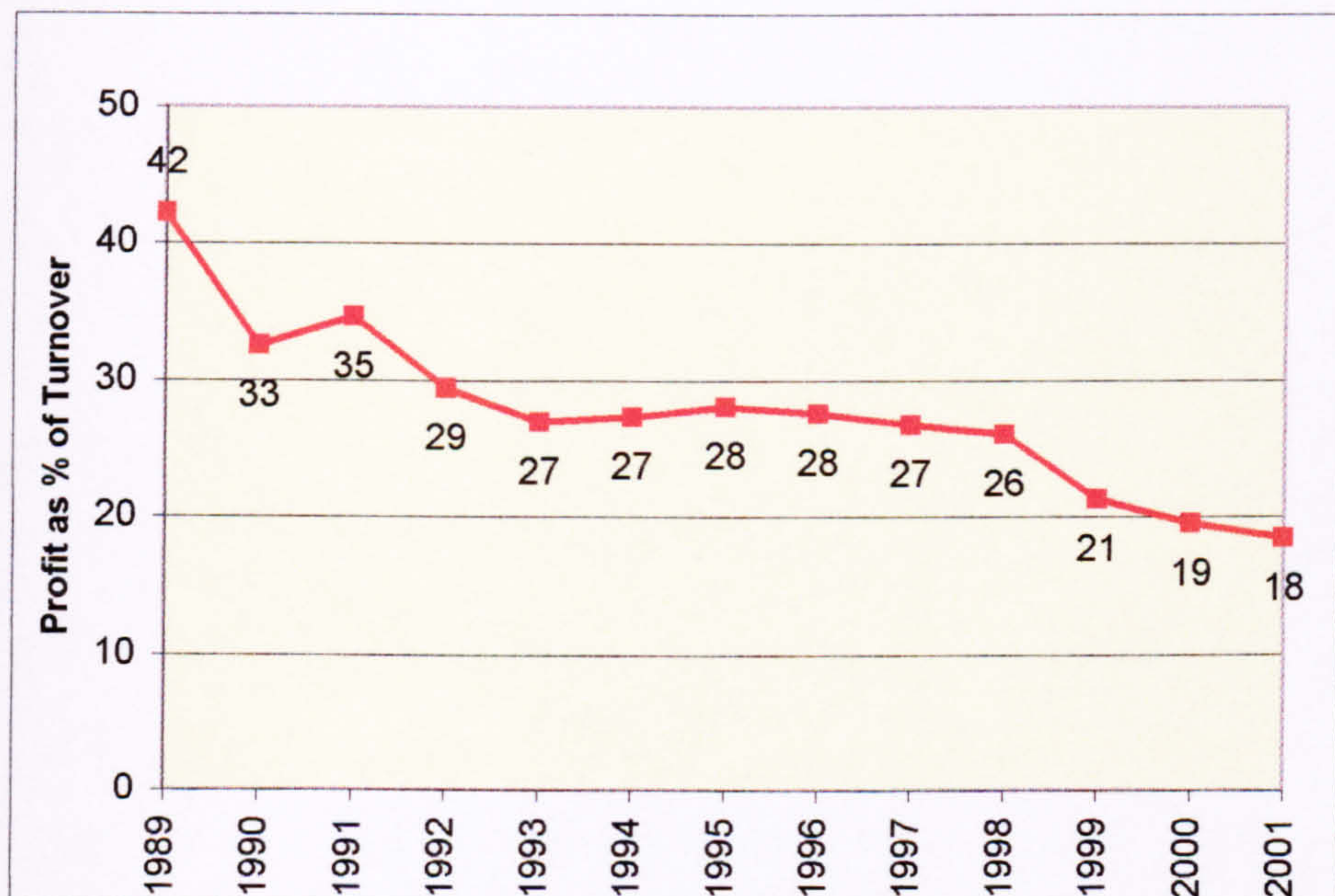
No decision has yet been made on the number of redundancies required to tackle the financial crisis, as consultation is continuing. The job losses are expected to come among middle managers involved in supporting the shops, as the plan is for shop managers to be given more autonomy over how their enterprises are run.

Oxfam aims to get annual shop profits back up to £10m, which would represent a margin of 17% if sales remained static. "I'd say a 20% profit percentage is reasonable," says Shekleton. "In the long run, we want to increase sales — but at the moment the priority is cutting costs."

However charity shop performance has declined steadily over the medium term, as shown by the almost continuous fall in profitability from 1989 to 2001 (Figure 4.6). A profit margin of just

18.4% in 2001, down from 42% in 1989, questions the entire *raison d'être* of the charity shop movement. Both the immediate downturn and the longer term fall in profit margins have engendered a growing fear amongst Heads that the traditional professionalisation process may no longer be delivering benefits. To argue that Heads' actions are intimately related to their identities is not to say economic drivers are absent. On the contrary, as ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift* shows, the profit motivation is a key component of the Heads' identities. A crisis in profits is, therefore, a crisis in the Heads' own personal identity assertion as a 'successful retailer'.

Figure 4.6 Profit as Percentage of Turnover, 1989 to 2001



sources: as Figure 4.1

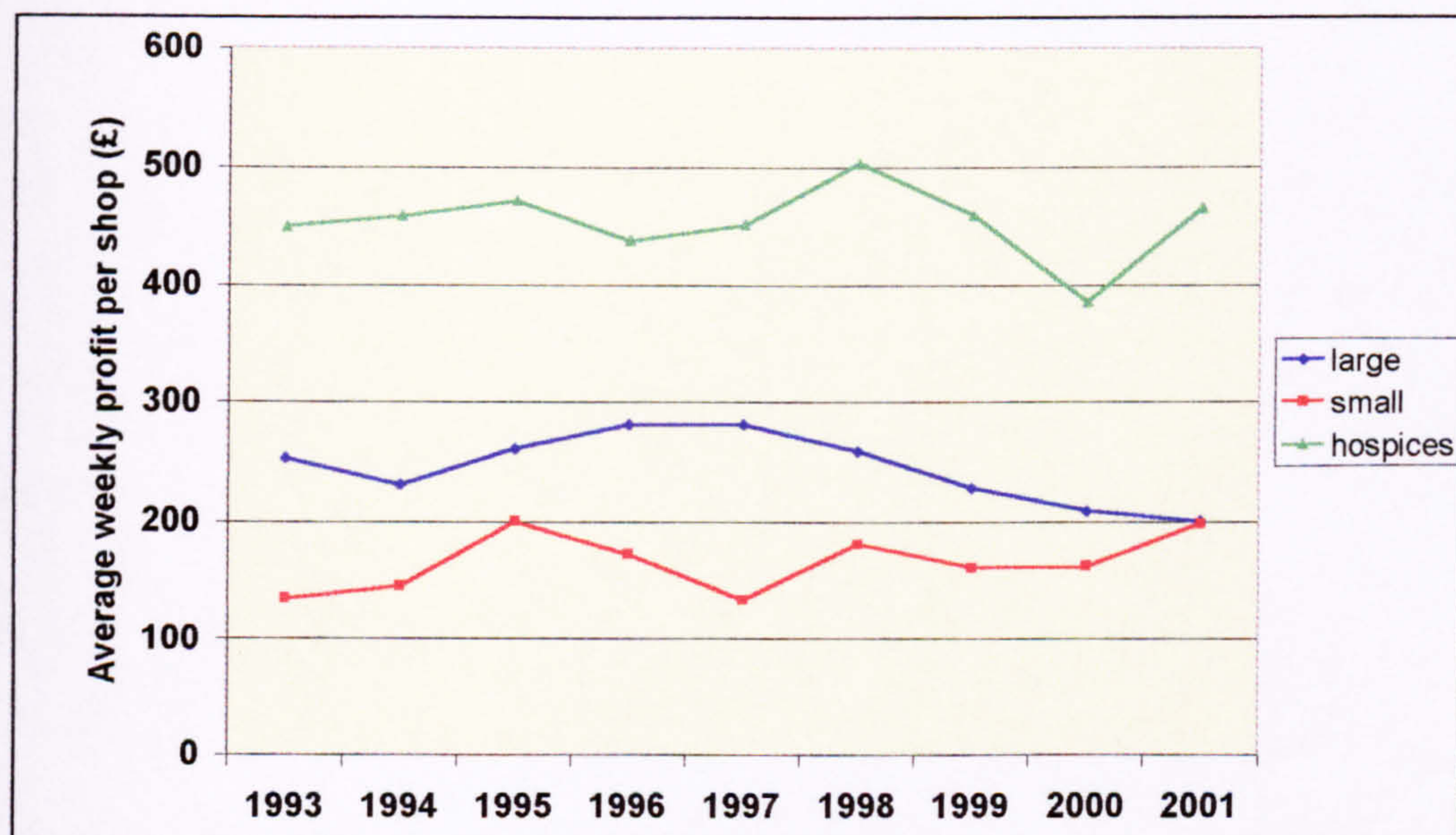
4.3.3 A Differentiated Sector

Averages for the sector as a whole disguise important differences within the sector. Figure 4.7 shows average weekly profit per shop from 1993 to 2001 for each of three categories of charity shop organisation: large charities (30 shops or more), small charities (under 30 shops), and hospices. This categorisation is logical and ensures adequate sample sizes for groups in the earlier years when data was less abundant. Hospice charities need to be differentiated from small non-hospice charities because they receive significantly more and significantly better quality donated stock than other charity shops and benefit from more volunteers and greater volunteer commitment. Dividing large non-hospice charities from small ones is also appropriate, because thirty or more shops creates both the potential for economies of scale and the need for central, managerial support.

The figure indicates real differences between these three groups. Most noticeably, it highlights the much higher average weekly profit generated by hospice charity shops, and the much lower average profit of shops run as part of a small operation. In three of the nine years (1994, 1999

and 2001) hospices made more than twice the weekly profit per shop than the large charities. The average profit for each category over the entire nine-year period stands at £453 per shop per week for hospice charities, £245 for the large charities, and £165 for the small charities. Another major trend is the convergence of the performance of the large and small charities. In 1993 (and 1997) the large charities made around twice as much profit per shop as their smaller counterparts, but from 1997 to 2001 their average weekly profit per shop fell towards the level of the smaller charities. At £200 in 2001 it is now significantly lower than the £281 made during their 1996 and 1997 peak and almost identical to the average weekly profit per shop of the small charities (£198).

Figure 4.7 Profits by Charity Shop Organisation, 1993 to 2001



sources: as Figure 4.1

In conclusion, charity shops are not an undifferentiated group. Different types of charity shop organisation have different financial performances over the past decade. However there are some distinct sectoral trends, namely a significant increase in costs and turnover throughout the period, but little growth in profit other than in the mid 1990s. Profits slumped from 1998 onwards because the sector's success and growth ultimately led to saturation, because of a new competitive threat, and because of over-reliance on the volatile rag market. Finally, profitability has declined inexorably over the last ten years, questioning the value of professionalisation and, indeed, the overall value of the charity shop concept. Most crucially, this has hit the largest charities – and their Heads – the hardest. The charity shop downturn is a crisis centred on the medium and larger sized charities.

4.4 Staff and Volunteers

4.4.1 A Volunteer Crisis?

One of the strongest long-term trends in charity shop organising has been the increasing use of paid staff as opposed to volunteer workers. There are two main reasons for this. First, charities have found themselves without enough volunteers and so felt *forced* to pay people instead. They would much rather have a full complement of volunteers, but in their absence they have no choice and must employ staff. Second, charities have *chosen* to replace volunteers with paid staff, even when there is no shortage of volunteers, in the belief that it will make management easier. In most charity shop organisations, both reasons have been important.

One of the most important differences between commercial retailing and charity retailing is that those ostensibly at the 'bottom' of the traditional organisational hierarchy are in some ways the most powerful people in the charity shop organisation. Volunteers are not paid and are not subject to contracts of employment. They do not have to do anything they do not want. They may feel morally superior to their managers, who they presume are motivated only by money. They tend to be much longer serving than managers of all levels which strengthens their belief that their understanding of charity shops is superior to that of the (usually younger) paid management. They feel a very strong sense of ownership over what they believe is 'their' shop and are sceptical of changes that attempt to 'improve' it. And ultimately they can walk away at any moment without worrying about lost income or a poor job reference.

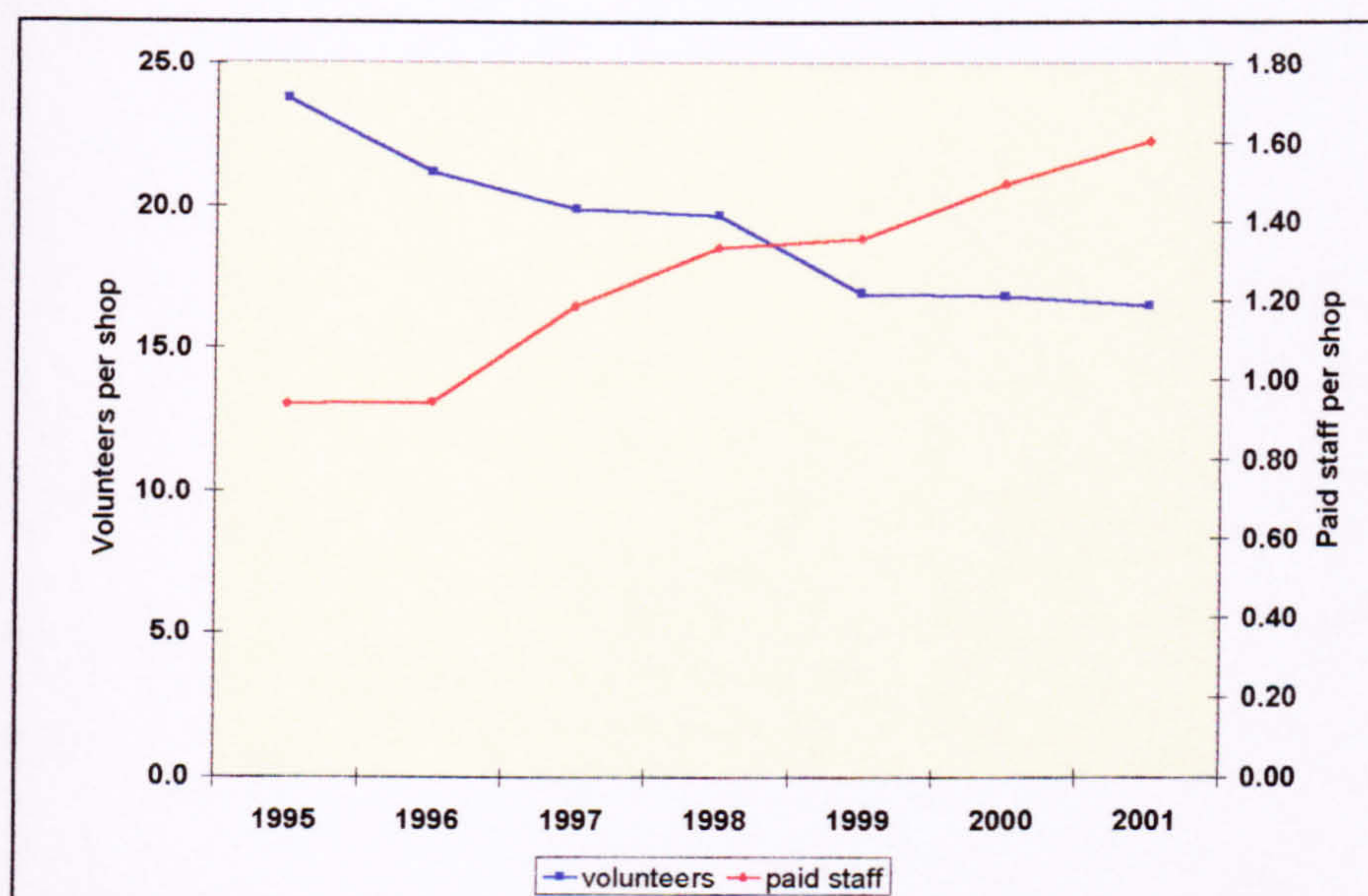
Of course not every volunteer is like this, but such attitudes do exist and have existed strongly in the past. Most importantly, there is a strong *perception* amongst senior managers that volunteers, in general, are 'difficult'. This is true, literally speaking, because managing volunteers is difficult and always different to managing paid staff. Relations of power and authority change utterly when managing volunteers and it is even questionable whether volunteers can be managed. Perhaps they can only ever be 'supported'. It has certainly been suggested that volunteer management is one of the most skilful jobs on the planet (Allis 1994).

4.4.2 The Growth of Paid Staff

Unfortunately, there were no data about staff in the earlier Charity Shops Surveys (1992, 1993 and 1994). However, the 1992 CIRPL report did offer some information about staffing, from which we can estimate that the sector employed around 2,300 staff in 1992 or an average of around 0.58 staff per shop. This probably includes only shop level staff, so adding something for head office staff and middle management would produce a plausible final guess of around 0.6 staff per shop.

From 1995 the CSS included questions about volunteer numbers, staff numbers and staff costs. Figure 4.8 plots, for six consecutive years, the average number of volunteers per shop and the average number of paid staff per shop. The trends are very clear. The average number of volunteers has fallen every year, from 23.8 per shop in 1995 to 16.5 per shop in 2001. Over the same period the number of paid staff has increased, from 0.94 per shop in 1995 to 1.60 per shop in 2001.

Figure 4.8 Numbers of paid staff compared with volunteers, 1995 to 2001



sources: Gillingham and Phelan 1995, Phelan 1996, Phelan 1997, Phelan et al 1998, Phelan & Goodall 1999, Goodall 2000b, Goodall 2001b

These three figures for average staff per shop – 0.60 for 1992, 0.94 for 1995, and 1.60 for 2001 – are somewhat abstract but they powerfully demonstrate the professionalisation of charity shop staff. Paid shop managers have been employed since the 1970s, but they became increasingly popular in the 1980s and 1990s. The figure (for 1992) of 0.60 paid staff per shop indicates that about six in ten charity shops had a paid manager, most of them run by the larger charities. This is an average and a very small number might have had more than one member of paid staff. But many will have had no paid staff at all, being entirely volunteer run. By 1995 there were 0.94 paid staff per charity shop, indicating that nearly every shop had a paid manager. A sizeable minority of shops had more than one paid staff member while many still had none, but most charity shops were run with one paid full-time manager and a team of volunteers. By 2001 there were 1.60 paid staff per shop, indicating a significant change in the staffing situation. The mid-1990s model of the paid manager supported by a team of volunteers is clearly being displaced. Paid assistant managers (to provide cover) and even paid shop assistants (as in commercial retailing) are being more widely employed. A small number of charities remain committed to a volunteer-only policy, but even these tend to need some paid staff as 'area managers' (in charge of a number of shops) and at head office. The great majority of shops have a full-time paid manager and many have more than one paid staff member.

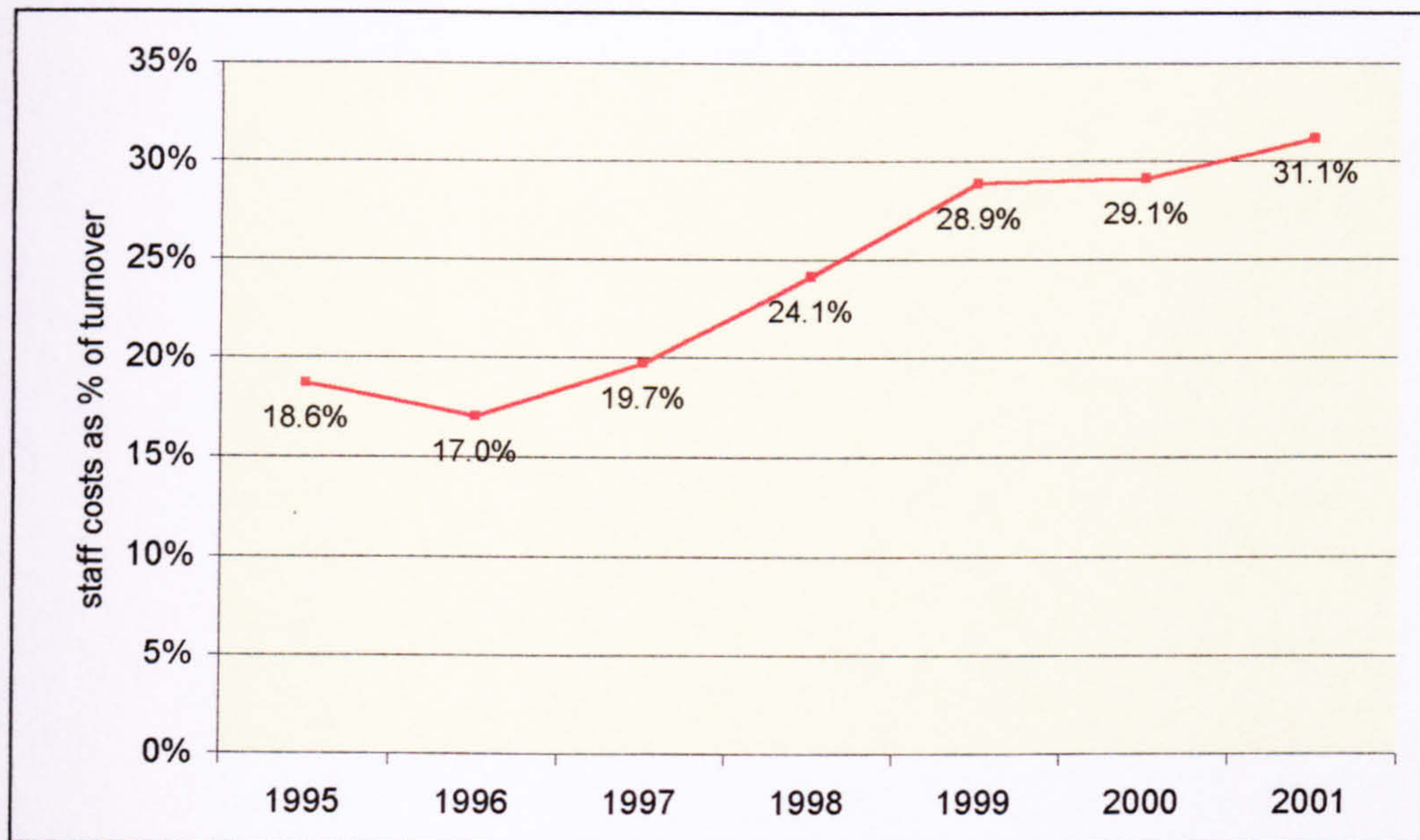
The number of volunteers has fallen over the same period. In 1995 charity shops benefited from at least 139,000 volunteers. By 2001 this had fallen by 18% to 114,000. This absolute decline has also, of course, accompanied the increase in shop numbers, leading to a large drop in volunteers per shop. The CIRPL report suggests 40 volunteers are required for each shop "to guarantee long-term success" (1992: 21) and the 1995 CSS quotes Graham Wadsworth, then business manager of Princess Alice Hospice: "Running a small shop without paid staff, on half shifts, requires six volunteers per day, 36 to cover a week. For larger shops this rapidly moves to 50 or 60" (Gillingham & Phelan 1995: 20). Assuming these estimates are correct, charity shops had nowhere near enough volunteers even in 1995, averaging just 23.8 per shop. At only 16.5 volunteers per shop in 2001, the situation is serious enough to engender talk of a crisis (Goodall 2000b). The absolute fall in charity shop volunteers also reflects long-term trends in the wider voluntary sector. The 1997 (UK) National Survey of Volunteering found a 4% drop in the number of volunteers, from 23m people in 1991 to 22m in 1997 (Davis-Smith 1997).

4.4.3 The Benefits of Paid Staff?

For some charity shop operators, employing paid staff is necessary but undesirable. Others are more optimistic, hopeful that paying staff will ensure the shops stay open longer, are run better and can actually increase profit levels. The available data suggests that, in general, the pessimists are closer to the mark. Figure 4.9 shows the proportion of income spent on staff costs over the last six years. If paying staff led to higher profits, sales would need to rise faster than staff costs, so this ratio of staff costs to income should fall. Unfortunately, the reverse is true. In 1995, 18.6% of all income went on staff costs. By 2001 this had risen to 31.1% of income, despite the fact that average income increased over this period. In other words, 31 pence out of every pound spent in a charity shop now goes on staff. On average, therefore, staff costs have eaten into income and reduced profits.

The decline in sector profitability highlighted in Figure 4.6 above is closely related to this increase in staff costs. Graham Wadsworth predicted this in 1995: "The limiting factor on growth is volunteers. This looks likely to increase the numbers of paid staff. However, volunteers do not like paid staff, so this will lead to less and less volunteers. The result will be a more professional but much less profitable operation" (Gillingham & Phelan 1995: 20). The use of 'professional' here is significant. One meaning of professional is, simply, 'paid'. Another meaning is 'competent and effective'. A shops operation that has more paid staff but makes less profit could be said to be professional under the first meaning but not under the second meaning. In other words, the shops staff are technically 'professional' but overall the organisation is less effective and therefore less professional. 'Professionalisation' is therefore a complex term with a variety of meanings, which makes it a very powerful discursive tool.

Figure 4.9 Staff costs as proportion of income, 1995 to 2001



sources: as Figure 4.8

The financial crisis that hit many charity shop organisations from 1998 to 2001 consisted of declining turnover combined with a high cost base, and therefore plunging profits. The highest individual cost was paid staff. In 1996, paid staff accounted for only 24% of all costs. Just four years later, they accounted for 39% of all costs. In an attempt to differentiate themselves from the scores of new charity shop organisations that were established in the 1990s, the largest organisations pushed ahead with the 'professionalisation' of their shops and their staff costs rocketed. When faced with a crisis in turnover, they were in no position to cope without significantly changing their approach. Between 1998 and 2001 hundreds of paid staff were made redundant by organisations such as Help The Aged, Scope and Oxfam. Most staff redundancies at Help The Aged were at shop level (such as paid shop assistants), whereas Oxfam found it necessary to trim down its layers of middle management. By 2001, staff costs had dropped slightly to just over 37% of all costs. This represents a reversal of the professionalisation process. It is not yet clear whether this a temporary setback for the sector, to be followed by renewed efforts to increase the proportion of paid staff in shops once turnover increases again, or whether it represents a significant departure from and rejection of the previous process. This thesis is one intervention in the debate. But it is clear that staffing issues were at the heart of the charity shop professionalisation process, again powerfully related to Head's identities and predilections.

4.5 Stock

We have already noted that one of the effects of a saturated charity shop sector is the lack of donated goods, such as clothing, bric-a-brac, toys, games, books, videos, tapes, CDs, household fabrics and kitchenware. These have traditionally been the lifeblood of charity shops. As early as 1995, Pam Cherry of St. Giles Hospice Shops noted "a deterioration in the quantity and quality of donated goods" (Gillingham & Phelan 1995: 30) and this decrease in both quality and quantity continued in the second half of the 1990s.

Originally, charity shops would simply wait for members of the public to bring their unwanted items through the door. However, two factors increased the demand for such goods: ever-increasing numbers of charity shops in the 1980s and 1990s; and increasing use of rapid stock rotation procedures. Removing unsold stock from the floor after four, three or even two weeks generally increases overall turnover because it maximises the number of unique items offered to customers over any one period. Each charity shop has thus become hungrier for donated stock at the same time as there are also more mouths to feed. In order to meet this hunger, there has been a professionalisation of stock generation, with many charity shop organisations developing methods to generate donated goods pro-actively rather than simply wait for them.

In the 1970s some charities began distributing leaflets that explicitly asked people to bring their unwanted goods to a specific local charity shop. Such 'leaflet drops' often coincided with the opening of the shop and so also raised awareness of the new shop. This practice developed into more regular leaflet drops and, eventually, the distribution of plastic sacks with the leaflets. It is estimated that 91 million leaflets or sacks were distributed in year 2000 by charity shops, which averages about four leaflets or sacks a year for every UK household (ACS 2001).

Collecting stock in this way obviously costs money (Goodall 2001b). British Heart Foundation (BHF) is the country's largest collector of donated stock, spending £6.1m on stock collection in 2000-01. This is nearly as much as the combined spend of its three nearest competitors at this activity (Oxfam £3.1m, Scope £2.0m and Help the Aged £1.3m) and nearly the same as its own entire total profit that year (£6.2m). This collection spend involved the distribution of many millions of sacks. The stock rotation policy meant that BHF shops had 12,000 tonnes of stock leftover as rag, or 75% of all that it collected, sold to textile merchants for £1.3m. In and of itself, therefore, the collection and sale of stock to textile recyclers is a loss making activity. If it had simply collected this stock and sold it all as rag, BHF would have lost over £4.3m. But the proportion (roughly 25%) of donated goods that it managed to sell through the front door – that is, to customers, not textile merchants – generated £36.9m worth of turnover of donated goods. And in order to get hold of this valuable, quality, saleable stock, the collection costs are arguably well worth it.

Textile banks also developed as a method of generating charity shop stock. 4,000 textile banks are estimated to exist in the UK, over half of which are operated by five charity shop organisations, with most of the remainder also operated by charity shop organisations. Each bank collects upwards of 5 tonnes a year, on average, most of which goes for sale in charity shops. Some charities, however, sell their textile bank stock directly to textile merchants (ACS 2001).

Both house-to-house collections and the use of textile banks have substantially increased the total amount of donated second-hand clothing going to charity shops. This also represents a decrease in total quantities of household waste, something the charity shops sector has been trying to explain to local authorities. Recent estimates suggest that 100,000 tonnes of clothing passes through the charity shops sector every year (ACS 2001). This is roughly equivalent to 4.5 kg per household every year, or one sack. Waste Watch (2001) estimates that 26 million tonnes of waste is produced in the UK each year, which approximates to 1.2 tonnes per person. Charity shops textiles would therefore account for about 0.4% of all UK waste. Given that this figure is only for textiles and most other charity shop stock has a higher density, it would be reasonable to suggest that at least one half of one percent of UK waste, and probably more, is kept out of landfill by the activities of charity shops.

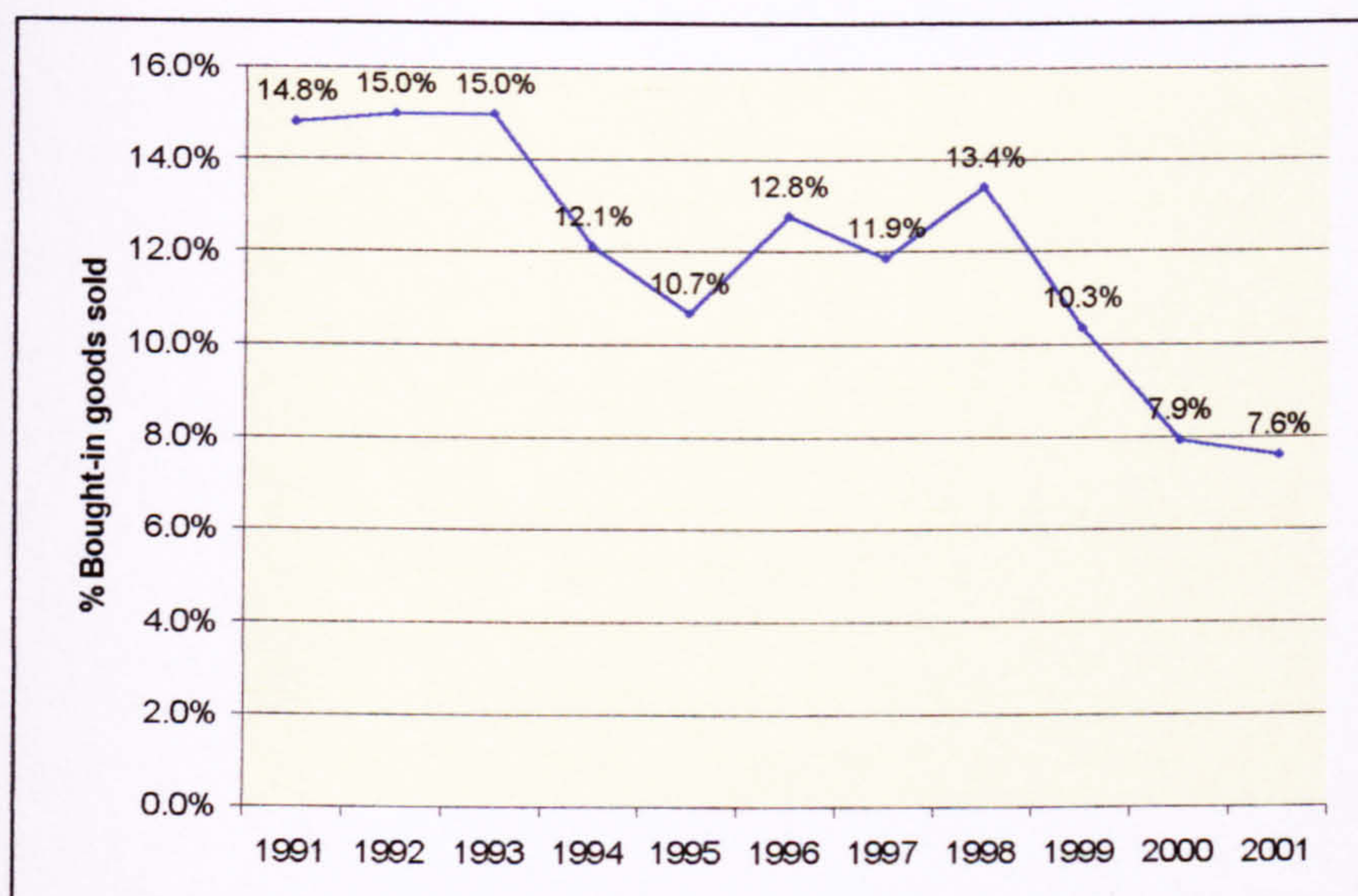
A third means of overcoming shortages of donated goods is selling something else, namely *bought-in goods*. These are goods that the charity buys in order to sell, such as Christmas cards, 'ethnic' and fairly traded goods, and general gift-ware. They are usually new rather than second-hand, so they are sometimes referred to simply as 'new goods', but this is inaccurate terminology, because sometimes charity shops receive as donations goods that are new, perhaps from a manufacturer's end-of-line. These are donated goods, not bought-in goods.

These definitions matter because there has been a widespread and vociferous campaign against charity shops in general and their selling of bought-in new goods in particular, mainly from the small business lobby represented by the Federation of Small Businesses. Charity shops receive relief on the Uniform Business Rate (UBR) – the local authority tax payable on all business premises. The 1986 Local Government Finance Act specifies that as long as charity shops sell "wholly or mainly" donated goods, they are entitled to a mandatory 80% discount on their UBR. In addition, the local authority has the discretion to waive the remaining 20%. Clarifying what are donated goods and what are bought-in goods, whether they are new or second-hand, is thus crucial in ensuring charity shops receive this valuable rates relief.

Data relating to bought-in new goods thus became vital to the charity shop sector's attempts to defend itself and these have been collected since 1991. Figure 4.10 shows bought-in goods as a proportion of total turnover. Over a decade the proportion of bought-in goods has halved, from 15% of total turnover in 1992 to 7.6% in 2001. Increases from 1996 to 1998 were followed by a significant decrease from 1999. Note that the data is from different year-on-year samples. Note also that the percentage is calculated from an increasing total turnover, so that 15.0% in

1992 represents a lower absolute turnover of bought-in goods (£27.6m) than the 7.6% registered in 2001 (£32.7m).

Figure 4.10 Bought-in Goods as Proportion of Turnover, 1991 to 2001



sources: as Figure 4.1

The clear view from charity shop Heads is that this overall decline represents an active divestment from bought-in goods, for three main reasons. First, bought-in goods are necessarily less profitable than donated stock because of the initial outlay. Second, because theft is rife in charity shops, stolen bought-in goods represent a real financial loss to the charity. The theft of a donated item, however regrettable, does not have the same financial impact. Third, many charity shops were persuaded to reduce bought-in goods because of the vociferousness of the attacks by the small business lobby and the fear of losing their rate relief. All three reasons can be read as a reverse in the professionalisation process and an acceptance that charity shops must be treated differently to ordinary, private sector retail outlets. These reasons are based on fairly rational, business-based decisions, again emphasising that the argument pursued here is that identity is crucial to human activity, not that all human activity be reduced to the impulses of identities, nor that some actions are about identity and some are about economics. Attempts to categorise actions in such a way are doomed to fail. The fact that the Heads make conscious decisions based on financial data can be an example of their identity assertion.

Related to the turn away from bought-in goods are concerted attempts to diversify the donated products sold by charity shops. Two main product types in particular – furniture and books – have anecdotally been very successful since around 1997, with some shops dedicated specifically to these products. Unfortunately no data exist for the various donated product lines of charity shops – textiles, bric-a-brac, furniture, books, etc. – that would allow us to add quantitative figures to these anecdotal success stories.

To summarise, donated stock has become more scarce as the number of charity shops has increased and as each shop has demanded greater quantities. Attempts to increase the total supply of donated goods, particularly through house-to-house collection and textile banks, have been remarkably successful in generating stock but have necessarily increased costs. It seems probable, from the example of British Heart Foundation, that collection costs do pay for themselves in increased turnover to both customers and textile merchants, but it remains open to debate whether they have a positive impact on profit. As with the increase in paid staff, the purposeful generation of stock has been seen as a process of professionalisation.

The sale of bought-in goods has generally fallen since 1991 as a proportion of total turnover and has also fallen in absolute terms since around 1998. This is partly a reaction to very negative publicity surrounding the sale of such goods and partly a reaction to the relatively low profitability of bought-in goods compared with donated goods. In the arena of bought-goods, a particular type of professionalisation has been significantly reversed. The development of new product lines such as books and furniture is a different and more promising avenue of development for charity shops, building on the traditional strength of charity shops – selling second-hand donated goods. This can be seen as a recognition of the limits to 'professionalisation' and an attempt to develop charity shops within these limits rather than to try to break out of those limits.

4.6 Understanding Professionalisation

This brief overview has introduced the recent history of charity shop performance and some important information about staff and stock. The picture has been of a concept that began from very humble beginnings and grew slowly at first, but experienced accelerating growth through the 1980s and rapid growth in the 1990s, until the charity shop sector became about as large as the UK population could support given current conditions. This growth was accompanied by significant changes in the shops, particularly the introduction of paid staff and the formalisation of stock generation. Shops themselves were also moved to primary high street sites from tertiary and secondary locations and given increasingly 'professional' shopfits, though little quantitative data exists to illustrate this. These changes were seen as 'professionalisation'. The financial crisis from 1998-2001 has led to some reversal of professionalisation, particularly the *reduction of bought-in goods and paid staff*.

I wish to argue that 'professionalisation' should be seen as powerfully related to notions of similarity and difference, or identity. Increased levels of bought-in goods in the 1980s and of paid staff in the 1980s and 1990s represent a desire by those running charity shops to make them more similar to 'ordinary', private sector retail outlets. This desire did not just stem from good business arguments, though these were present in the professionalisation process. The desire was also powerfully related to the personal identities of this generation of charity shop Heads, almost all of whom had joined charity shop organisation from private sector retailing, as we will see in the next chapter, ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift*. The new organisational context was very different to their previous experiences and the associations of charity shops in the 1970s and 1980s were mainly negative, and this shocked and bemused them and challenged their senses of personal identity. The desire to make charity shops more like private sector retail outlets was intimately related to their desire to make charity shop management more like private sector retailing.

Finally I suggest that the partial reversal of 'professionalisation' signals a greater acceptance of the difference of charity shops from private sector retail outlets and a demotion of the desire for similarity between charity and private sector retailing. The reduction of bought-in goods and paid staff referred to above can be seen as an increased tolerance for 'difference' and a lessened desire for similarity. This reversal of professionalisation was prompted partly by the financial crisis of 1998-2001, which is why charity shop performance is an important context for understanding charity shop Heads and their identities. The reversal is also partly related to the development of a vibrant charity shop 'sector', that validates the identity of charity shop Heads as people different to other (private sector) retailers and to their parent charities. ~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors* will develop this last point.

~ Part Two ~

Analysis:

Charity Shops and Identity

Each chapter in Part Two focuses on a different aspect of the identity processes surrounding charity shop Heads. ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift* assesses how and why charity shop Heads came to join a charity shop organisation, engaging the Heads in a discussion about the boundary between the private and voluntary sectors that they themselves crossed. Using interview data, it asks how the Heads' personal identities shaped and were shaped by crossing this border and how material practices of charity shop organising – the professionalisation process – developed out of these early experiences.

~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors* assesses the relationships built by the Heads in key inter-organisational relations: with the parent charity of the charity shops organisations, with other charity shop organisations, and with private sector businesses. The focus is on the variety of 'selves' created by Heads in their dealings with a variety of 'others', and the way these relationships relate to discourses of professionalisation. Because some Heads see themselves as the personification of 'their' charity shop organisation, and even 'their' sector, there is a mutual co-emergence of personal, organisational and sectoral identities.

~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism* studies the Heads as they assert a very important component of their personal identities – their professionalism. The chapter examines Heads' different attachments to different understandings of what it means to be professional. Focusing on the three case studies, it contrasts interview-based talk about professional identities with the assertion of these identities in practice.

~ 5 ~

Identity Shift

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Chapter Summary

This chapter examines Heads relations with their previous selves and their career histories. In particular it focuses on their movement from the private sector into the charity shop sector. This allows exploration of their (remembered) experiences of this crucial moment in which, we might posit, their identities were under significant pressure as their context shifted. Through a focus on this moment we gain powerful insight into their processes of identity construction which led directly to a particular version of charity shop professionalisation. 'Identity Shift' refers not just to the Heads' migrations from one sector to another but also to the continually shifting sense of what charity shop organisations and charity shop Heads are and should be when relating to diverse others.

5.1.2 Identity

In discussing recruitment into organisational identities, Jenkins remarks that, "Humans experience life as a series of social transitions from one identity to another ... these transitions are ritualised to a greater or lesser extent" (1996: 144). Rituals allow for easier transition from one identity to another, marked by *separation* from the old identity, the *transition* process, and then *incorporation* into the new identity. It is likely that for many charity shop Heads this process was to a "lesser extent" or never occurred at all. Many of them joined charity shop organisations at their very beginning, when there were few existing rituals. Often joining as a lone Head and given just a chaotic file of papers marked 'Shops', a small desk and no staff, there was often no-one to help them settle in. They were to some degree on their own. There may of course have been induction into the charity itself and perhaps its work, and learning about cancer care or heart research would have felt very different from their previous retailing

experiences, acting as part of the transition process. But there was little to introduce them to the charity shops themselves.

There is a tendency in Jenkins' account to see each of these processes – separation, transition and incorporation – rather unproblematically. This chapter studies the identity shifts of charity shop Heads, albeit as they are remembered during interview, and demonstrates that these were often complex and sometimes traumatic. Rather than a well-trodden path or a structured series of rituals, their shifts were usually marked by novelty and confusion. Very few people in the history of humankind had become charity shop Heads before, and there was no guidebook about how this process of becoming was to be performed, what the work of a charity shop Head should entail, or what a charity shop Head should look like. Charity shops are therefore an excellent example of the openness of the process of identity construction, countering those texts that over-emphasise the received rather than constructed nature of organisational identities (Woodward 1997, Hall 1996).

5.1.3 Professionalisation

This is not to say all Heads were faced with a blank slate. In fact, most joined charities that already had some shops operating 'out there somewhere'. Usually free of the charity's control, these shops tended to be run wholly by the volunteers that had established them. Sometimes the charity would only know about a shop because it received random cheques from it. The Heads were employed to start controlling these shops and developing the shops operation. This 'moment' of identity shift is therefore crucial to the subsequent professionalisation process. The reasons why the Heads joined the sector and their earliest experiences of charity shop organising are the formative moments in the creation of the professionalisation that transformed the charity shops sector. It is also important to remember that not all the interviewed Heads are 'second generation'. There are also two 'first' and three 'third' generation Heads (see Table 3.1).

5.1.4 Data

This chapter centres on the interviews with charity shop Heads. Each was asked to tell the story of their career and to elaborate on the reasons for joining charity shops and their first impressions (see Appendix I). The interview data are both used illustratively and more rigorously mapped to get a sense of the overall patterns and experiences of a significant proportion of charity shop Heads.

5.1.5 Chapter Structure

It is extremely useful to liken the career and identity shifts of the Heads to migration between an old world and a new world. Charity retailing was certainly seen as another world by those that came to it from elsewhere. Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom, describes the perceived division between private and voluntary sector retailing:

I think there is still a perception in commercial retailing that the charity sector is not as efficient as the commercial sector and maybe people have got into the voluntary sector because they're not up to the standards required in the commercial sector ... the EFFECT of that is that people who are making a career in retailing are a little bit nervous sometimes, particularly if they're ambitious and they're in mid-career, about moving into the charity sector or staying here too long.

He knows some ShopsCom middle managers fear it will be hard to return to the private sector because of their association with charity. Charity retailing has a lower status than private sector retailing and this sectoral context shapes the construction of people's identities. Chris believes the perception is quite wrong, asserting that the charity sector is "quite as demanding as the commercial sector", but feels the perception is still common. This is a powerful exposition of the relationship between sectoral and personal identities, with individuals nervous of the characterisations that others may impute onto them because of their particular sectoral location. It also points to the potentially negative associations of the charity sector, which I suggest is one of the main aspects of identity that drove the professionalisation process. The metaphor of migration therefore prompts an interesting set of questions about cultures and identity.

After noting the education and first jobs of the twenty Heads and charting the story of their careers to the present (5.2), we ask why they migrated to the world of charity shops (5.3). We then examine what shocked them when they first began charity shop organising and the differences and similarities between charity shops and their previous work experiences (5.4). Before concluding the chapter (5.6) we will see how the Heads adapted (and adapted to) the new world of charity shops (5.5).

5.2 Career Stories

In interview the twenty Heads were asked to relate their career history from their first job to the present. The three tables in this section look back to the places they set out from and the journeys they made to reach the world of charity shops. Fifteen Heads went as far back as their formal education (five did not talk about this). Table 5.1 shows the highest educational level reached by these fifteen Heads before their first job. The table shows a diversity of educational experiences, with nearly half reaching degree level. Degree subjects included Law, Religious Studies, English, and a Business HNC. Retailing is generally a vocational trade or profession that does not require any particular education or academic training.

Table 5.1 Educational Experiences of Interviewed Heads

<i>Highest Educational Level</i>	<i>No. of Heads</i>
Left school at age 16	3
Completed A levels	3
Completed a Bachelors degree	7
Served apprenticeships	2

Table 5.2 shows the Heads' first jobs. Many began their careers as trainees, with nine beginning as management trainees for private sector retailers (all department stores or national chains) and five starting with private sector retail experience at a different level: three as retail assistants for national chains, one as a buyer for a local store, and one on their own stall in Camden Market. The first jobs of fourteen out of the twenty Heads were in retail, a career that was to last most of their lives.

Table 5.2. First Jobs of Interviewed Heads

<i>First Job</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Type of Organisation</i>	<i>No. of Heads</i>
management trainee	private sector retailing	national chain/dept. store	9
sales assistant	private sector retailing	national chain	3
trainee	private sector engineering	engineering firm	2
trainee	private sector finance	accountancy/banking firm	2
self-employed	second-hand clothing	stall in Camden market	1
hairdresser	private sector	local hairdressers	1
buyer	private sector retailing	local store	1
out of work actor	-	-	1

Table 5.3 shows the career trajectory of each interviewee, from their first job to their current role as a charity shop Head. To ensure interviewee confidentiality it is not possible to identify which interviewee pseudonym matches which career path. The table is colour coded according to the following key. The background colour indicates the sectoral context of each career segment. The text colour shows the type of job position.

Key to Table 5.3	
<i>Sectors (background colour)</i>	<i>Abbreviations</i>
private sector - retail	dept = department
private sector - retail fringe	indep = independent
private sector - non-retail	manu = manufacturing
charity sector - non-shop	mngg = managing
charity shop sector	mngt = management
career break	org = organisation
miscellaneous	privsec = private sector
	asst = assistant
<i>Job Positions (text colour)</i>	
mngt assistant other	
mngt volunteer other	
Head volunteer other mngt	
(*) No. is a reference used in the text instead of the pseudonyms. 'F' or 'M' indicates gender	
(**) The width of each box approximates roughly to the time spent in that role. Because the Heads have different ages and career lengths, box widths are relative only within careers.	

Table 5.3 illustrates three main points. First, there is a great diversity of career paths leading to the same destination. Eight different types of starting point lead through seven different environments, twelve different categories of employment, and 108 different periods of activity, to one similar role – Head of a charity shop organisation, indicated by all the dark blue to the right of the table. Second, no Head began their career in the charity sector, although case 18 began in arts management, which is similar. All undertook a significant movement in their career. Third, despite the diversity, a background in private sector retailing is very common, appearing in the career histories of sixteen of the twenty, indicated by the large areas of green on the left hand side of Table 5.3. Becoming the Head of a charity shop organisation directly from a career in private sector retail management occurs in eight of the twenty cases (3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 19 and 20).

Table 5.3 also demonstrates several other features. First, two interviewees (7 and 18) are not classified as Heads of charity shop organisations at all. One is the director of a very small charity and has responsibility for the small number of shops amongst other duties. The other is director of fundraising for a healthcare charity and has many responsibilities other than shops. We will refer to these as 'first generation' charity shop Heads, characterised by no experience of private sector retailing and responsible for a very small number of shops as part of a much wider charitable role. Case 7, for example, is the charity's director and is ultimately responsible for the one shop, but generally "it runs itself" and he has very little to do with it on a daily or

Table 5.3 Career Histories of the Twenty Heads

No. *	Education	First Job	Subsequent Jobs **									
1 M	apprentice	engineering trainee	various manufacturing jobs with engineering firms	director, inner city regeneration project	development mngr in charity shop org A	Head, charity shops B	Head, charity shop org C	Head, charity shop org				
2 M	degree	retail assistant	mngt, department stores	mngt, independent stores	mngt, own store	wholesale & import	voluntary fundraiser	Head, charity shop org D				
3 M	degree	mngt trainee, retail	buying and senior mngt with private sector retailers				Head, charity shop org E					
4 M	O levels	accountancy trainee	mngt accounts dept, manu firm	mngt trainee with retailers			Head, charity shop org F					
5 F		hairdresser	mngt with a number, private sector retailers									
6 F	O levels	buyer, retail store	selectionship priv sec, retail	mngt director, privsec retailer	career break	own nightclub & restaurant	voluntary counsellor	Head, charity shop org H				
7 M	apprentice	engineering trainee	mngt, engineering firm	mngt director, engineering firm				Director, small charity with some shops J				
8 M		mngt trainee, retail	buyer mngt, department store	store mngt department store				Head, charity shop org K				
9 M	degree	mngt trainee, retail	mngt, private sector retail	buyer, private sector retail				Head, charity shop org L				
10 M	degree	mngt trainee, retail	retail mngt, private sector retail - one organisation, 25 years					Head, charity shop org M				
11 F		retail asst	up to retail mngt	charity administrator	retail-related manufacturing	wholesale & import		Head, charity shop org N				
12 M	O levels	mngt trainee, retail	retail mngt, private sector retail	regional manager, charity shop org P				Head, charity shop org Q				
13 F		store mngt privsec retail	private sector retail mngt	marketing controller, large privsec retailer				Head, charity shop org R				
14 M	A levels	trainee City banker	City banking & underwriting	administration, charity shop org F	shop mngt then area mngt then regnl mngt charity shop org F			Head, charity shop org S				
15 M		retail asst	up to regional retail mngt		regnl mngt charity shop org T			Head, charity shop org U				
16 F	degree	market stall	stall, indoor market	own shop	shop mngt then area mngt charity shop org E			Head, charity shop org V				
17 F	A levels	mngt trainee, retail	store mngt & buyer, retail	career break	retail mngt indep store	mngt charity shop org M		Head, charity shop org X				
18 M	degree	actor	theatre management	arts fundraiser		healthcare fundraiser including some charity shops						
19 M	degree	mngt trainee, retail	private sector retail mngt	stock control, privsec retail	mngt production, privsec retail	privsec retail consultant		Head, charity shop org Y				
20 M	A levels	mngt trainee, retail	store mngt, private sector retail	running concession, privsec retail	director, privsec retail operations	privsec retail mngt consultant		Head, charity shop org P				

weekly basis. Case 18 is a fundraiser for the hospice and the shops are a small element of his work. Most charity shops were once run this way, given little time by senior charity managers who, in any case, knew little or nothing about retailing. Cases 5, 10 and 13 joined their charity shop organisations as a third generation Head, after a previous Head had been the first to take sole control and responsibility and had then moved on. The other fifteen Heads in Table 5.3 are all 'second generation' Heads in that they were the first person to offer full-time, dedicated, senior managerial support to their shops operation.

Secondly, although seven Heads went directly from private sector retail management to leading a charity shop organisation, four volunteered in the charity sector before becoming Heads. Case 2 worked as a volunteer fundraiser before offering the charity his retail skills. Case 6 became a bereavement counsellor for an organisation that subsequently spotted her retail experience and asked her to take up the position of Head of charity shops. Following unemployment after a successful retailing career, Case 9 had the time and money to become a volunteer charity shop manager to gain experience, before being recruited to Head a separate charity shop organisation. Finally case 17 gained voluntary experience earlier in her career which subsequently gave her an edge over other candidates applying to become Head of charity shop organisation W.

A third pattern is that of working up within the charity shop sector. Cases 1, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 all learnt about charity retailing through middle management positions in charity shop organisations. All but one moved on to become the Head of a different charity shop organisation. As the current ('second') generation of charity shop Heads reaches retirement, this pattern will become more common. It will no longer be necessary to replace them by recruiting from outside the sector. There is now a pool of middle managers in the sector with not just retail experience but *charity* retail experience. This means that the sector-shifting Heads of the 'second generation' are a unique generation in the history of the charity shops sector. They were the generation that led charity shop professionalisation. The third generation of Heads face very different challenges.

A fourth interesting pattern is that two people (cases 4 and 14) have spent the majority of their careers in charity shops. Case 4 spent ten years in management accounts, three years as a retail management trainee, and thirty years (so far) as a charity shop Head. The younger case 14 has spent an even greater proportion of his career (if less absolute time) in charity shops. After four years in City banking and underwriting, leaving disillusioned at the age of 22, he spent the twenty subsequent years working in charity shop management. This pattern is also likely to be more common over the next five to ten years.

Fifthly, there is some overlap of charity shop organisations. Organisations P, M, E, and F are listed in more than one place in Table 5.3, indicating that some of the twenty charity shop

Heads have worked in the same charity shop organisation in the past, probably alongside each other. As the next chapter indicates, the sector is quite close-knit and a number of inter-organisational relations are based on contacts with ex-colleagues from other charity shop organisations. Some Heads even knew each other before joining the charity shop sector. There is considerable overlap in the private sector retailers for whom the Heads worked during their careers. Table 5.4 shows four named private sector retailers appearing in the career histories of no less than eleven of the Heads, over twice as many as all the other named retailers added together.

Table 5.4 Named Private Sector Retailers

<i>Private Sector Retailer</i>	<i>Heads</i>
John Lewis	3
Marks & Spencers	3
Clarke's shoes	3
Debenhams	2
others	5

Finally in four cases the Head was previously Head of another charity shop organisation (1, 4, 9, and 17). In three of these (1, 9 and 17) the move was to a larger and better known organisation. Indeed, since the interviews were conducted number 17 has moved to an even larger charity shop chain "to seek a new challenge", perhaps to be the first person to Head three separate charity shop organisations. We have now identified the key patterns of change in the careers of the twenty Heads. The next section examines why they came to charity shops.

5.3 Reasons for Migrating

5.3.1 Promoting Immigration

The metaphor of migration can help us understand the processes of career movement from the 'old world' of the private sector (not just private sector retailing, but all the private sector starting points in Table 5.2) to the 'new world' of charity shops. The Heads' reasons for moving into the charity shops sector fall into two main categories: the search for a new sectoral context (5.3.2) and the search for a new job role (5.3.3). Many Heads have reasons in both categories and they are inter-related.

These reasons were given in an interview up to thirty years after the event but sometimes only three months after. In personal histories, we often remember the story itself rather than the actual event. Memories are also sometimes as much to do with contemporary concerns as our original feelings. It is understandably difficult for people to recall accurately not just what happened, but why it happened and what they felt at the time. This does not undermine the memories presented here, but we must be aware that these memories are not unmediated experiences.

Of course, the migration to charity shops would never have occurred if charities had not decided to recruit ex-retailers to take control of their shops. Figure 5.1 shows a fairly recent recruitment advertisement for a charity shop Head. It is looking for a 'third generation' Head to replace the original second generation Head. Note the highly mixed narratives of 'retail' and 'charity' – the aims of the charity, the retail professionalisation plan (expansion, "customer care strategies", store design and merchandising techniques), the desire for a "senior professional" from a "major retail organisation", and the clever phrase "a lasting impact" which can be read as both 'impact through helping children' or 'impact through being a successful charity retailer', depending on the reader. This mixture is emphasised by the image, which links the charity's cause with the work of the shops. In particular, note the stress on the 'look' of the shops, which supports the argument of Gregson *et al* (2002) that much charity shop professionalisation has been about the physical presentation of shops. Although as I argued in ~ 4 ~ *The Professionalisation of Charity Shops* this must be seen as only one of a number of important aspects of professionalisation, the look of the shop is particularly important in relation to the Head's identities, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter (see 6.3.3).

Recruitment is thus a crucial context for understanding the subsequent identity expressions of Heads and the professionalisation process. To be employed *because* you are a retailer is a crucial validation of that identity and an implicit blessing from the charity to assert that identity and transform the charity shops using your retail expertise.

Figure 5.1 NCH Head of Retail Recruitment Advertisement, The Guardian, 03-X-98

Creative & Media, Marketing | 45

MAKE SURE WE LOOK THE BUSINESS

Head of Retail Operations Up to £35k + Benefits + Car

At NCH Action For Children, we're working to build a better future for children and families in need. With over 320 projects supporting more than 30,000 young people, we're one of the UK's largest childcare charities.

A network of 40 retail charity shops nationwide across the country plays a vital role in funding our work. The plan is to expand this network, to at least 80 by the year 2001 – by which time it will deliver an estimated turnover of over £10 million and employ some 200 staff. We are looking to appoint a dynamic, forward-thinking individual who can make this vision a reality.

Evaluating the needs of customers, donors, volunteers and potential supporters alike, you'll develop innovative customer care strategies whilst introducing the latest in store design, merchandising techniques and technology to our shops.

In so doing, you won't merely be raising the profile of NCH Action For Children on the high street. You'll be changing the face of charity retailing.

That's why we want to hear from senior professionals, ideally from a major retail organisation, who combine excellent people and project management skills with proven marketing flair. You must be able to lead and manage change, demonstrating the ability to devise and implement customer care strategies and understand the issues involved in working with unpaid staff.

It's a unique opportunity to put your ideas into practice and make a lasting impact. If the prospect inspires you, write for an application pack, quoting reference HOR086/G, to NCH Action For Children, Highbury and External Affairs HR Department, 85 Highbury Park, London N5 1UD. Alternatively, telephone our 24 hour answerphone on 0171 704 7168, fax 0171 226 2537 or e-mail shaunm@high.nchafc.org.uk

For an informal discussion please telephone Bernard Campbell on 0171 704 7025.

Closing date: Tuesday 13th October 1998.



Jean Bilôme is a good example. He joined Silver Charity after they:

had been running shops for three years and had put somebody in charge of it who'd been with the charity a long time, had no retail experience, and was mostly engaged doing something completely different to shops [a 'first generation' Head]. Which was a CHARITY thing. They used to do that sort of thing. Realised that in fact it was a little more complicated {laughs, sarcastically}, the business of running high street shops, and perhaps they ought to try and get somebody who had got retail experience. So I was hired on the back of having had all my career to date in department stores. So I was a retail professional as such. I was hired on the back of being a retail professional and the organisation feeling that it needed that sort of er ... specialisation.

Jean is proud to be a professional retailer. It is the essence of his workplace identity and he is very comfortable with it. That identity was created through and because of the length and nature of his career experience. His crossover to the charity shops sector was based not just on maintaining his identity but celebrating it; hired because of the skills and knowledge associated with being a professional retailer. Replacing a non-retailer and entering a non-retail organisational environment must also have exaggerated his sense of being a retail professional. While the recruitment process is important, however, it is only a necessary *condition* for the creation of the Heads' identities and the professionalisation process. This chapter focuses primarily on the reasons why some people were *attracted* to charity shop organising, how they experienced it once they arrived, and how they tried to change it. This section deals with the first of these three.

5.3.2 Sectoral Context

Sixteen of the twenty Heads worked in private sector retailing before migrating to the charity shop world. In discussing their reasons for moving, many mentioned the pressured environment of private sector retailing and by implication the less pressured environment of charity retailing. Andy Young, Head of Grey Shops, is one example:

I didn't really want to stay in what you might call mainstream retail, because principally I didn't really like the culture and so therefore didn't really want to see myself staying there. I didn't actively hunt down the charity retail sector but I started to look at what I felt were more modern and friendly people to work for.

He explained what he didn't like about the culture of 'mainstream retail':

I spent a lot of time, many long hours working, hard long hours and making tough decisions and basically the end result goes back to shareholders ... I was keen to get out of the more cut-throat environment, I suppose, and get into something that had a better outcome.

This is a personal critique of capitalism. He links the purpose and ownership of the organisation – its sectoral context and value system – with the pressures put on the workforce. Joe English, Head of Gold Hospice Shops, felt the pressure at her old private sector retailer was "rigid":

Whatever was achievable was never enough, goals became further and further away and less and less achievable, so the management rewards were fewer and fewer. So to be able to combine high street retailing with [Gold Hospice] a local charity, whereby at the end of a working week you were able to say that all of your efforts actually contributed to

making someone else's life a little bit more comfortable, as opposed to lining the pockets of already rich people, reaps its own rewards.

These kinds of comments were made by six other interviewees. These Heads desired to leave a sector that was characterised by intense pressure and driven by the ruthless and exploitative nature of organisations working for the benefit of shareholders and senior management. Most Heads were attracted by the ability to remain in retailing but shift economic realms. They perceived the voluntary sector to combine a less pressured environment with a more noble purpose.

Two Heads entered charity retailing directly from unemployment. Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom, explains that unemployment dampened his attitude to the private sector that had "dumped" him and predisposed him to a new sectoral context and environment. Similarly, Andy Young's dislike for the "cut-throat" culture of private sector retailing partly stems from the fact that this culture spat him out:

I started as a sales assistant and I ended as an area manager with responsibility for about 20 stores and turnover of about £24m. I got made redundant from [the company] in the late Eighties when lots of retailing was starting to slump.

Chris and Andy both perceived the charity shop sector to be a gentler organisational environment, because of the voluntary sector context. Unemployment no doubt helped them overcome their reservations about 'charity' and take a greater risk than they would have done had they not been made redundant by private sector retailers.

Unemployment can be seen as both a 'trigger' factor and a more underlying cause. It exaggerates discontent with the private sector that might already have existed at some level prior to redundancy, but it also makes the search for a new job urgent, advancing the timing of the jump to charity shops. A further 'trigger' factor was mentioned by Eve Turner, Susan Parker, Jean Bilôme, Georgie Rogers, and Charlie French: a building-up of frustrations to a certain level, a sense of restlessness that becomes overwhelming. Jean Bilôme referred to being at "the bottom of the cycle with the employer I was with," and adds, "I was probably ready for a move."

For some Heads a generic charity motivation lay behind the move. Susan Parker, Head of HospiShop, had experience of both the charity and non-charity sectors and found "the idea of working in the non-profit environment was VERY much a plus factor." Andy Young had applied to the Body Shop as well as to Grey Charity Shops, "because it's ethical," indicating a desire to work within the social economy. Kim Noakes, Head of Orange Shops, felt his decision was partly political:

I had always said I wanted to go into working for a charity. I've always had sort of leanings that I should be trying to do more. I was involved at university with raising money for Shelter and was very active with Shelter, partly because of political leanings I suppose and things like that.

He did not go on to work with Shelter, but found an outlet for this part of himself with Orange Shops. His personal identity as 'a retailer' and also as 'someone with political and social leanings' combined perfectly in the charity shop sector. This required a shift not in his identity but in his sectoral position, in order to more fully realise that identity or deeper sense of self.

Vivian Hodgson described her very personal relationship with the *particular* charity she works for at Violet Shops. The cause motivates her and she would not work for another charity retailer:

The reason I went to work in this hospice originally, as a volunteer, I was trying desperately to get over the loss of my own mother, and I couldn't. I found it very difficult. But when I went to work in a hospice I realised that, 'Poor old me! There are millions like me! It's not just me!'. That will always be my motivation for whatever I do, the fact that Mum didn't have a hospice to look after her, so I'm very motivated by my work, because I do believe in what the hospice is trying to do for people.

In complete contrast, Jean Bilôme was not at all motivated by the charity context:

But the charitable aspect I couldn't give a shit about, to be perfectly honest. I mean I do now. In a way I've grown into the charitable aspect. But I never started with that. I wasn't remotely interested in that. And I think actually what got me this job was the fact that I actually said that, at the time, because it was the truth really, I just said "Well there's no point in kidding them that I'm ..." And ever since then, of course, I've interviewed dozens and dozens of people and very often they say to me, "Well we like the idea of doing something charitable," and it's not why I employ them. I don't want to hear that. You want to hear something very dynamic, about ... knowing their business.

A focus on dynamism and knowing your business might appear at odds with notions of 'charity', but a charity shop organisation with a very competitive and business-like focus may actually be offering the best to its parent charity in terms of funds. 'Charity' does not preclude competency, professionalism or efficient organising. Jean knew he was selling his identity as a professional retailer when he applied for the job at Silver Shops and he now employs the same sort of people. However, he too mentioned the ruthlessness of private sector retailing; he was sacked, and dealt with the hurt by believing that "in retailing if you don't get fired at least once you're no bloody good!"

5.3.3 Job Role

The second group of reasons for becoming a charity shop Head surrounds the search for a new job role. All those with previous retail experience deliberately entered charity shops so they could *continue* as retailers. For Jean Bilôme "it wasn't about working for a charity; it was using retail skills where clearly they were needed." Similarly for Ashley March of Navy Hospice Shops:

It was nothing to do with charity shops. I enjoy retailing. I come from a family of retailers and have enjoyed my career within [private sector retail] tremendously, both on the shop floor and at management level, looking after a chain of shops. When the Navy Hospice advert came along it was right up my street. They were asking for my skills to be put into practice, and it was really a retail project that appealed to me and it happened to be [this] hospice.

Even those that *did* care about the charitable aspect still stressed how important it was for them to continue with retailing. They might have been seeking a new world, but they didn't want it to be too different from home.

Nicky Legge: I've never been tempted to go into any other side of charity work. I'd be an absolutely useless fundraiser ... The other side of the charity world has never appealed to me in the practical issue side of things. I care about it desperately and that's why I stay in charity work because I want the money to go to a good cause. But I'd be no good at it, I haven't got the patience, or the personal skills. I'm a retailer, I like selling, and I'm very lucky to have found my niche in things. What charity retailing gives you is the opportunity to think on your feet and create things and generate. It's not restrictive in any way. So it's charity retailing for me, I think!

Nicky Legge with his personal "niche", and Ashley March with a "retail project" right up his street, were not alone in displaying a strong personal attachment to retailing. Sasha Grant, Head of Ginger Shops, proudly explained, "I've always worked in retailing. My father was a greengrocer." The link with a family history of retailing, also made by Ashley March, indicates the power in these retailing identities, bound up as they are with suggestions that retailing is 'in the blood'.

Continuity was present in all but two career moves into charity shops and 'retailing' was the common element. However there were two inter-related ways in which the second generation Heads could *improve* their retailing job roles by migrating to the charity shops sector. First the sector was expanding rapidly and desperately recruiting people with retail experience, producing opportunities for significant career progression. Sasha Grant's retail career advanced faster with Ginger Shops than if he had stayed with his private sector company:

I was looking from a naive perspective: "what's an obvious move on from a big store manager? It's field management." At the time when I moved to [the charity shop organisation], [the private sector company I was with] said 'Stay with us, there's an opportunity for possibly an area role here or there', but I was never convinced whether it was genuine. It was the usual, 'If you stay with us we can promise you something' ... What struck me about the advert, it was field management. It was also charity retailing, which up to that point I'd no real clear view of. I had a look round then at Oxfam, Barnardo's ... and began to think, "well they're not very good, there's maybe some potential to make my mark and an impact."

This indicates the second (and related) way that Heads were able to improve their job roles by joining charity shops. They were attracted to a sector that was relatively undeveloped and unpopulated by other retailers. It offered plentiful virgin territory for retailers, places where retailing skills and techniques could be put into practice (and expect to produce good results quickly) without the stultifying historical context of private sector retailing and its "pressured" and "ruthless" cultures. It was an opportunity to establish an alternative to private sector retailing that emphasised its positive rather negative aspects.

'Empire building' was a strong motivation for a number of Heads. Chris Vaughan joined ShopsCom when it was a "newly-formed shops operation" with just a handful of pilot shops. He was charged with opening a hundred shops over three years, a challenge he "relished". Ashley March had "a very good career" with one private sector retail,

but I was a small fish in a huge sea. Here I have the opportunity to be a large fish in a very small pond, and I'm actually finding it quite testing in that it's allowing me to put into place and to use all those skills which I acquired in [the private sector], but because of the bulk of politics was never allowed to practice. Here [Navy Hospice Shops] I have free rein because I'm in charge and it's nice.

Ashley's use of the 'fish and pond' metaphor indicates how strongly the 'others' around us shape our identities. Changing our contexts is one strategy for increasing the value we ascribe to ourselves. Becoming the Head of a charity shop organisation gave a sense of greater importance, autonomy, and power. Like the new migrant, the charity shop Head came from the old world of private sector retailing to settle virgin lands in the new world and become a boss of their own business. Charlie French recalled that:

It was quite exciting, a blank sheet of paper. Things were just starting to happen in the charity shop world at that time.

The sectoral context and the job role were closely related for Hilary Quinn:

[The private sector retailer I worked for] was a company that didn't really encourage individual thought, and as a manager you were very much expected to just implement the company policy. So little room for initiative and innovation. And I wanted a complete contrast. I wanted to actually make an impact on the organisation that I was working for. So the appeal of joining a charity was that I could actually call the shots and do my own thing without the restrictions of a large corporation. I think companies like [that] appeal to individuals who are company men, and not people who are necessarily particularly innovative or inventive.

His reference to company men reminds one of Whyte: "These people only work for The Organisation. The ones I am talking about belong to it as well" (1963: 3). What some of these Heads wanted was quite the converse – an organisation that belonged to them.

This desire to make an impact is a powerful aspect of identity, a need to 'be' something. Because the job of Head of a charity shop organisation in many cases offered autonomy from the charity, it provided a job role that allowed the Heads to create their own organisations, with their own organisational style and context. The 'blank sheet' referred to by Charlie French offered both an expanded job role and relative freedom to define his own organisational context, all within a wider organisational context (the charity sector) that could give motivation and a lower level of pressure. When this is combined with the opportunity to continue as a retailer, it is easy to see the attraction of the role to the potential Heads.

5.3.4 Practicalities

The charity shops sector generally pays lower salaries for the same roles than private sector retailing, but the evidence suggests that in most cases the Heads found it easy to overcome this barrier. Kim Noakes felt that a lower salary was a price worth paying for a less pressured environment, the chance to become a Head of Orange Shops instead of a regional manager elsewhere, and the sense of doing something of social value. He could also afford it:

I was at a stage in my life where my career, and my salary in particular, was not as important. I was quite prepared to, and did, take a very substantial drop in salary, and I'm quite comfortable with that. Hate it many a time, but, you know, most of the time I think I would rather have a lower salary, better quality of life and also a feeling that I'm putting something back.

Ricky Kemp could afford to enter the sector by joining Indigo Charity because of his wife's career:

I'd always said that I would consider a complete change at some time, and the time seemed right. It happened to coincide with my wife's career taking off. She had been retraining whilst our children were young, and had become a solicitor and her career was taking off, so in terms of family budget and so on that gave me a bit of space to be able to do what I wanted to do.

In both these cases, the private sector – through Kim Noakes' past financial clout and Ricky Kemp's current support from his wife – is in effect subsidising the voluntary sector through household economies.

There is no single reason why people became charity shop Heads, nor one single basket of reasons common to them all. The most important reasons were the desire for a new sectoral context, the desire to work for charity generally or a particular cause, the chance to keep using their retailing skills, the opportunity to be the boss, and the need for a change and a new challenge. Now that we have some idea why these migrants set out for the new world of charity shops, we can better assess what they experienced when they made landfall.

5.4 Experiencing the New World

5.4.1 First Impressions

The data in this section were generated by an interview question that asked Heads to remember their “first impressions of charity shops and charity shop organising” (see Appendix A). This was an attempt to disrupt the contemporary reconstruction of history, with the past simply reflecting the concerns of the present, by:

- targeting those feelings that left ‘impressions’ on the Heads, scars on their memory, and
- by stressing that these impressions are allowed to be temporary and easily revised – ‘first’ – and therefore not necessarily something they are expected to think now.

Here, then, Heads recall their first impressions upon entering the new world of charity shops and compare charity shop management with their experiences of the private sector. Their migration from the private to the voluntary sector was, for most, accompanied by continued involvement with retailing. The differences they identify tended to relate to the sectoral shift; the similarities to the continuity with retailing. However, there were also important practical differences in the retailing aspects of their work.

Whilst all Heads entered charity shops because they desired a new challenge, most also felt the need for some familiarity in this new world. This was expressed in two ways: through a rhetorical insistence on the similarity of charity shops to private sector retailing and through practical methods designed to recreate aspects of private sector retailing within the charity shops sector – in other words, professionalisation. This allowed them to express their difference from their parent charities (‘We are retailers’, ‘We are business people’) and their uniqueness within the voluntary sector context. Conversely, there were also rhetorics of difference. These allowed them to express that they had made an important move away from the private sector and to demarcate the uniqueness of *charity* retailing within the wider retailing industry. As Woodward notes, “the marking of difference is thus the key component in any system of classification” (1997: 30) and classification is a key element in identification processes. This section explores the Heads’ rhetorics of similarity (5.4.2) and difference (5.4.3) in relation to identity and professionalisation. It also asks why, in their first impressions of charity shop organising, Heads focus more on the differences from private sector retailing than the similarities to it (5.4.4).

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that expectations were very important in framing these ‘first impressions’. In the two following examples, both Heads used the term “shock” to describe their first impressions of charity shops; but while Joe English was shocked by differences from private sector retail, Bobby Walker was shocked by similarities:

Joe English:

It was a tremendous culture shock for me to come from high street retailing where everything was so rigid. And I found personally that I had to make a lot of changes to my style of management, which was quite interesting for me. It didn't take me long to learn that you couldn't go by the basic principles of high street retailing because it just didn't work.

Bobby Walker:

My first impression of charity shops was how much was stolen! How much people steal from charity shops! Quite incredible. You think it's bad enough in the commercial retail sector. But with a charity shop I thought that would be unheard of, but it's not at all! And the aggravation! And the complaints! It's exactly the same! It's still seen as a retail shop, and people have no honour, it seems. Quite strange. That was my biggest shock.

Joe English had expected charity shop organising to be quite similar to high street retailing, but was shocked by its differences. Conversely, Bobby Walker had assumed that the charity shops would be immune to the stealing that afflicts private sector retail outlets, based on his (unfounded) perception of the public perception of 'charity'. He expected differences, but was shocked by the similarities. Similarities and differences then, and the identities related to these, are partly based on expectations.

5.4.2 Similarities of the New World

The last section indicated that many Heads came to charity shops because they could remain 'retailers'. In describing their first impressions of charity shops, it is therefore no surprise that many Heads identified similarities with private sector retailing. Three main similarities were mentioned: retail principles, the retail product, and retail management.

Eve Turner:

But in terms of retailing, well I suppose really you have to say it's retailing – and that's pretty much the same really, even if it's different goods and stock and staff, it's really getting things in to sell and getting people to sell them for you. The principle, I suppose you could call it, is that of retailing; it's the same principle really.

Hilary Quinn, Head of Red Shops, detailed two categories of 'retailing principles': display issues – such as lighting, flexible shelving systems, the use of correct hangers and size cubes; and space management – where the amount of shop floor space allocated to each product type is based on its contribution to total turnover. He felt that:

many of the principles of retailing crossed over very neatly from [my private sector retailer] to charity shops, in particular the theory of the use of space and proportionate display

A number of Heads with private sector retail experience had worked in fashion retail, so felt they already had a sense of the charity shop product:

Kim Noakes:

I mean I've obviously dealt with clothing all my life, so I have a clear understanding of clothing, I know what sells, I know how it should sell, what customers basically want. So I didn't have a real problem with that stock side of it.

In terms of product, Sam Jones' previous retail experience had even greater similarity to her new charity shop work at SkyBlue Hospice Shops:

I was used to dealing with second-hand clothes. On my stall I always used second-hand, so I was used to rummaging for my own business, and charity shops are doing similar sort of things sorting through clothes. So it seemed like an easy, natural progression in a way. I had an interest in bric-a-brac anyway. My work would take me to flea markets where you get a feel for what's collectable and what isn't collectable.

The Heads also discussed a set of similarities relating to retail management. However, as discussed above most of the Heads interviewed were the first 'retailer' to manage their charity shop organisation and were the first to establish management systems and structures. These Heads were faced with a lack of management systems and therefore either had little to compare with their previous experiences or faced a situation very different to their previous experience. They tended to make comparisons between their old world experiences and the management systems that they themselves introduced into charity shops. As we might expect, the systems they introduced usually imitated those they had learnt in their previous careers: pyramidal hierarchies; paid shop, area and regional managers; financial accounting systems; personnel and disciplinary procedures; and attempts to impose general organisational order so that bills and invoices were paid, offices and shops were cleaned, and communications were effective. These *produced* rather than *experienced first impression* similarities of management are discussed in the next section (5.5).

Apart from some similarities of product, Bobby Walker's mention of stealing, and the basic principles of retailing – successfully combining places, product, and people – there was no other mention of the similarities between charity shops and private sector retailing.

5.4.3 Differences of the New World

Between them the Heads noted six differences between charity shops and private sector retailing. The first two of these relate to volunteers, the next two relate to retail issues at shop level, and the final two relate to the sectoral positioning of charity shops.

Volunteers

The presence of volunteers is undoubtedly the biggest difference of all. When the Heads talked about this key difference, they mostly referred to the difficulty of controlling people without contracts or salaries. Andy Young, Head of Grey Shops, explained (my emphasis):

I think on the surface there is an immediate difference and that is principally there are an enormous amount of volunteers who are working in the stores, who wouldn't be there unless you were a charity ... in a normal environment you'd be employing them. So the degree of store compliance to central directives is influenced by the fact that many of the people there don't really have to do it if they don't want to.

The emphasis draws attention to this perfect encapsulation of the 'cultural' differences between private sector retailing and charity shops, between the second generation Heads with their professionalisation agenda and the volunteers in the shops. On one hand is the

phrase "store compliance to central directives" which, though not jargon, contains a very particular retail management rhetoric. On the other is the phrase "don't really have to do it if they don't want to" which is the language of everyday life. The quote recalls Stephen Robertson's view at the start of this thesis and indicates that Heads are well aware why their authority is severely circumscribed.

A volunteer's whole rationale for working in a charity shop is completely different from that of a private sector retail assistant. This changes the whole nature of worker motivation and management. Instead of a disillusioned retail assistant working only for money, who sees the customer and the manager as exploitative obstacles to be resisted, and who can't wait to finish for the day (Casey 1995, and primary research of Canex staff – see next chapter). You have a committed volunteer who personally knows her customers, who wants to come to work each week, and who works for the cause and for the shop. This has major implications for shop and head office managers, as Georgie Rogers of Turquoise Shops elaborates:

Whereas in the commercial world you manage your staff, HERE you don't necessarily manage your staff because you've got volunteers. You now have no executive control over them in terms of how you pay them or whatever, and therefore demand a service back from them. That's an obligation. The obligation HERE is more a PSYCHOLOGICAL contract than anything else. In the commercial world you've got the psychological contract AND you've got some sort of contract of employment which involves payment, holidays, and all those sorts of things. In our business you haven't.

Without a contract of employment the manager is left only with what Georgie calls the 'psychological contract'. Volunteers also have their own agenda and often little respect for authority or power. Here Bobby Walker talks about his encounter with a volunteer in one of Black's shops:

You can't INSTRUCT them. Because they are not paid, they are not members of your staff as such, they're coming out of the goodness of their heart ... We had an interesting example where they have a particular agenda of their OWN. One guy actually sat in a fitting room, eating his lunch, with the curtain closed! I mean, it was just unbelievable! We were open-mouthed when we got there {laughing}! An unbelievable situation. Now that wouldn't happen in John Lewis!

He reports that the volunteer "shrugged" and "thought he'd done nothing wrong" and that was the end of the matter. The volunteer believed the Head was wrong and had no sense of the Head's authority – which means the Head *has* no authority. This indicates a degree of confidence and a sense of equality (or even moral superiority) on the part of the volunteer and it is not an isolated example.

Remembering her first impressions of the shops, Terry Ingham, Head of White Shops, referred to the 'charity mentality' of the particular socio-demographic profile of volunteers:

First impressions? Absolutely blooming awful. No organisation ... I came into absolute chaos, they had very little decent organisation and all the frustrations that went with that. The bills went to the wrong place and people would phone up the shop and there was this little old lady being told the water was going to be cut off. Stupid things which were bad organisation.

...

Everybody had the charity mentality ... You went in and there were cardboard boxes everywhere. This is typical of charity shops, a pile of belts tied up with elastic bands. Just horrendous, but that's how the volunteers liked them. I can remember one shop in Stoke on Trent. It really needed revamping. Oh, we found stains that must have been from the turn of the century. They kept suitcases full of stuff. They were all people who'd been through the war and who wouldn't part with anything. This mentality of throwing things out they cannot cope with. So somebody comes in and says, you've got to put it in that rag bag there, and they couldn't cope with that. Volunteers find it very difficult, and I think it is that mentality of being through the war and not wanting to part with anything.

She was clearly shocked by this "horrendous" display of disorder and saw this as a huge difference from the organised private sector retailers she had worked with before. She associates this type of volunteer amateurism with a very specific socio-demographic profile, a very particular set of identities: white women born between approximately 1910 and 1940. Instead of 'culture clash', might we use the phrase 'identity clash'?

The culture of not throwing things away relates to the view that charities must operate at absolute minimum cost. This example is from the HospiShop research diary:

I was severely berated today for extravagant use of tea bags and ordered to use one tea bag for every three mugs in future "because we're a charity!" [Shop 5]

This radical cost focus is clearly at odds with the 'business investment' perspective of many of the Heads. The view that 'you have to spend money to make it', conflicts directly with the radical cost focus of some volunteers. Eve Turner of VolShop, however, sees this same generation of older, female volunteers as capable of great feats of organisation:

Their organising is quite amazing really, they are just very good organisers. There was one shop, where they were selling Christmas cards from our catalogue and taking orders in the shop and it was so organised, really well thought out. Every order went in a book and they paid the money, then the orders went off and came back in boxes. They made up each order and put them into bags, each order complete in itself with a raffle ticket matching the order number, and hung on a coat-hanger on a rail, and they just had to come in, and 'Oh, I'm this number' and find it on the rack, and that's your order. Really simple you know, so simple, and really well organised.

You can trust them to come up with good ways of doing things. They ARE from a generation really ... they weren't encouraged to work out of the home, and they really ran the households, often quite big, complicated ones, so they're real organisers, and I think there's that generation of women who know how to organise things, and they're organising our shops now!

The differences between the views of Eve and Terry point to another major difference of charity retailing – the variety of standards between shops. Whilst one set of old ladies are organising brilliantly, another set are creating chaos. This variety was extremely frustrating for many Heads and led to standardisation, one of the most powerful elements of the professionalisation process.

The presence of volunteers is the first and most important of the six differences between charity shops and private sector retailing. The second is the 'speed' of management processes and is partly related to the first. Joe English of Gold Hospice Shops links the socio-demographic nature of many volunteers to the speed of management processes:

When you're dealing with high street retailing on the management side of things, you can set your objectives ahead of you, you can aim for that and make sure that you reach your target. But on the charity side, us as a local charity, we only have part-time management actually running the shop, so we're governed by a whole army, a volunteer work force, and to try and reach objectives and goals with people in a specific age group, who are giving their time voluntarily is very, very difficult. So we found that really did slow down the process of how fast we were able to achieve objectives really.

The issue of pace and speed was also Eve Turner's first impression:

My first impression of charity shops, and [the charity] generally, was how slow it was to get anything done ... I miss some things, particularly the pace of private sector retailing.

Kim of Orange Shops feels the speed element is related to the charity shop stock – you receive unsorted, uncleaned, unpriced, unhung second hand clothes stuffed in a black sack rather than sorted, clean, priced, new clothes already on hangers and wrapped in polythene, so things simply take much longer to prepare:

I came into it and found that charity shops work so slowly, and still do find that most frustrating, how slowly things happen ... it was basically the speed that they moved at ... Of course this is an organisation where you don't know what your stock is going to be until it arrives, and you then have a huge amount of preparation. It's that element that makes it much slower.

Kim also talked about 'buying in' the culture of speed by employing middle managers with retail experience. A Head can repopulate his organisation to alter aspects of its practices, such as its speed and language:

When I joined the organisation we had two area managers who'd been recruited within the previous six months who had retail experience. None of the other area managers had a background in retail. They had come through the charity, social services types. Great working with volunteers, wonderful people people. But they hadn't retail experience. Everybody I have recruited since then has had a retail background

... They bring speed, they think on their feet, they act quickly, they get things done quicker. They just have a clearer view, they don't need to be led. Because I'm leading the business and my background is retail too and when I say, 'LFL sales' and everyone would know what 'LFL sales' were if you had been in retail. It's just jargon, but everything is that much easier if you're speaking to somebody from a retail background.

This process – Heads filling their organisations with people like them – takes further the change that was initiated by senior charity managers and trustees when they first decided to

recruit external private sector retailers as Heads of their charity shop organisations. It is closely related to the Heads' desires to recreate the familiarities of the old world of private sector retailing in their new realm of charity shops. We recall it was also identified by Kanter (1977, see 2.4.5 above). Surrounding themselves with people like themselves gives the Heads a number of benefits: some political strength against other less retail-focused cultures within the shops organisation and the parent charity who might be critical of the commercial methods pursued by the shops; greater effectiveness in translating their decisions down the organisational hierarchy; and emotional comfort in dealing with 'people like them' who have made the same career decision they once did, reinforcing their sense of creating an 'alternative retailing' in a new world. This last is powerfully related to identity.

Shop Level Retail Differences

These middle managers can help overcome the third major difference between charity shops and private sector retailing. Kim Noakes notes the difficulty, or even impossibility, of universalism (having all the shops the same) and centralisation (making decisions at the centre rather than in the shops) in the charity shops sector. This is not to argue that private sector retailers succeed in creating identical shop units through centralised and universalised management processes, but there is an important difference of degree.

I would love everything to be exactly the same in every shop. But God! We're dealing with charity shops! I don't know what stock there is. I don't know the volunteer situation. You cannot be like that! Therefore you have to allow people in the field who are running the business to take these decisions and make the choices that need to be made. I think they understand and respect that I will let them do that and they shouldn't need to come running to me for every decision.

Richard Goodall: Would that be different to how it would have operated in [your private sector retailer]?

Kim Noakes: Yes and no. It's very interesting. [My private sector retailers] were always wanting entrepreneurs, but they were always wanting entrepreneurs who did exactly as they were told! So it was a case of, if you did something entrepreneurial you were lauded, praised, promoted and given money and all sorts of things. If you did something entrepreneurial that failed, well you were looking for another job very, very quickly. I mean the culture changed very much in the [private sector retailer], anyway, when I was there. Initially it was all entrepreneurs and everybody was there to make their name and fortune, and latterly it became how many people could read how many manuals quickly enough and understand every piece of theoretical jargon and concept.

The very fact of voluntarism – the reliance on volunteer labour and voluntary donations of stock – and the wide geographical and temporal diversity of these voluntary contributions, creates a powerful constraint on centralised attempts to treat shops as identical. This wide diversity between charity shops and between the same charity shop over different periods of time, makes it extremely difficult to influence the nature of charity shops. This has the paradoxical effect of making all charity shops very similar to each other, particularly their reliance on ever-changing donated stock and variable numbers and quality of volunteers.

The fourth difference between charity and private sector retail also occurs at shop level and is also inherent in the voluntary nature of charity shops, especially the stock. Chris Vaughan

argues that the work of the individual charity shop manager is a purer form of retail than private sector retailing:

What I think is intrinsically different from high street retailing is the stock side. A high street retailer, a multiple high street retailer, has the stock chosen for them by the head office, priced for them by head office, and the gross margin is effectively controlled by head office. And then they either order what they want to sell, or maybe it's allocated to them, but at the end of the day, the job of the ordinary manager of a shoe-shop, or a supermarket for that matter, is to sell stock, and merchandise stock, that someone else has selected and priced. And therefore he only has a partial control over his business, namely the sales volume.

The charity shop manager, of course, has to first of all acquire the stock, whether that's by house-to-house collection or by encouraging people to bring it in. She has to select what is saleable from what they've acquired. That then has to be processed, it has to be priced, it has to be sized, it has to be steamed and got ready for display. It's almost like a little production line in the back of the shop. And crucially because the manager is responsible for pricing it, the manager is therefore responsible for the gross margin of the shop as well as the sales volume. And therefore the manager of a charity shop is actually far more accountable in profit terms than the manager of a private sector high street retail shop.

One of the key differences between charity retail and private sector retail is thus the increased degree of 'pure retailing' needed in the former compared with the latter. This argument is music to the ears of those many Heads who were keen to leave their old worlds only as long as they could continue to be retailers. It may also be an argument deliberately designed to undermine critiques of charity shops by private sector retailing. 'You're not real retailers' is the critique from the private sector. 'Our shop managers are actually purer retailers than yours,' the riposte from charity shops might be.

Sector Differences

The final differences between charity and private sector retail all relate to charity shops' position within the voluntary sector. They relate to the 'sectoral' reasons why charity shop Heads entered the sector, such as their desire for a less pressured working environment or a more noble outcome of their retailing work.

Fifth is the moral rewards offered by charity shop organisations to their paid staff. Private sector retailers can never compete with this. Bobby Walker, for example, feels that working for Black Shops:

is actually far more rewarding long-term, because you actually see the benefits directly, the funds going to charities. And the beauty is you're not driven by shareholders, who are the evil bloodsuckers, you know. We're not in that environment.

The final difference the Heads identified between charity shops and private sector retailing is the nature of competition. As Chris Vaughan says:

If you're a commercial retailer and you're so successful you beat all your rivals into the ground you think you've done rather well, whereas if you did that in charity retailing you might have a pang of conscience {laughing}.

This gentler form of competition occurs in the charity shops sector for at least four reasons: because competitors are also working for worthy causes which imposes moral restraints on

ruthless competition; because it is difficult to differentiate between shops that are reliant on voluntary support; because many Heads left the commercial retailing because of its ruthlessness and pressure and would not wish to recreate this context; and because the second generation of Heads were a small and specialised group of retailers in a somewhat strange new world who felt they ought to try to stick together. Competition and co-operation are discussed in the next chapter.

5.4.4 Why Difference?

There are a number of significant differences between charity shops and private sector enterprises. The presence of volunteers, the specific retailing aspects of the shops, and the charity motivation related to the sectoral context are the three main roots of these differences. However, there are also different opinions by different Heads as to what the key differences are – they are not an homogenous group with identical experiences.

Asked to compare charity shops and private sector retailing, the Heads focused more on differences. There are three likely reasons for this. Firstly, when asked to compare two things, people usually focus more on difference than similarity. If the Heads had been asked to compare their charity shops with other areas of work in their charities (fundraising, personnel, accounts, service delivery), they would probably have pointed to the differences from this work and, in the process, may well have portrayed themselves as very similar to private sector retailers.

The second probable explanation for Heads identifying more differences than similarities between charity shop and private sector retailing is that, from their first impressions, the differences were indeed more important and more numerous than the similarities. This underscores the importance and particularity of the presence of volunteers, the retail implications of relying on diverse donated second-hand goods, and the sectoral context of charity shops.

The third reason is that the Heads were recruited because *they* were different. If the charity shops had been the same as private sector retail outlets, the Heads and their new identities as heroes of charity shop professionalisation would have been defunct. To stress the difference between charity shops and private sector retail – and to assume the former should be like the latter – was to identify an heroic challenge that they could meet, something that could only be good for their identities.

5.5 Making The New World

It is worth stressing that the migration metaphor is not flippant. It is an attempt to develop an understanding of career movement between economic realms. The language of migration, particularly the specific migration from Europe to America, offers useful comparisons, such as the move from an environment in which the migrants were unhappy because of economic or political pressures to an already inhabited place that they perceived as 'undeveloped' or even 'virgin' and that lent itself to the creation of new society closely related to the world they left behind; but without some of the negative aspects of the cultural history of that old world.

So far in this chapter, the migrants have described their histories in the old world, arrived in the new world of charity shops, experienced their first culture shocks, and compared their new home to the old. Now their task is to build on this land. They use the structures and methods they remember from their past lives to reshape the new lands and its native people. But they too must adapt if they are to survive.

How did the Heads act in relation to the similarities and differences they found on their arrival in the inchoate charity shops sector of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s? The previous section reported Terry Ingham's first impressions of charity shops – the "horrendous" disorder, a chaotic "charity mentality", the "blooming awful" attempts at organising. Many Heads offered similar diagnoses. But, like Terry, because the new world was similar to their own – a land on the retail latitude – they felt they knew what to do and had the skills and experience to transform the chaos and amateurism into successful, organised, professional retail organisations. In many ways this is what they did, indicated by the success of charity shop organisations in the 1980s and 1990s.

The Heads undertook a process akin to taming the native volunteers and building a new home on the frontier. Unfortunately there are no figures, not even unreliable guestimates, for the number of volunteers that departed the charity shop world as a result of this influx, but numerous anecdotal reports suggest the numbers were significant.

The Heads displayed two distinct attitudes to the initial differences they identified between charity and private sector retailing. Most Heads found this difference unacceptable and saw the 'amateur' charity shops as 'wrong', saying 'things have to change'. However, some Heads were more tolerant of the differences, saying, 'this is interesting, things need to be done differently here, I must adapt to meet this new challenge'. The first group led the professionalisation process of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The latter group are developing alternative futures for the charity shop sector.

Jean Bilôme took the view that charity shops must become like private sector retail units. Here he explains the basic principles that he used to develop Silver Shops:

I didn't actually set about looking at charity shops as different. I just said, "This is a high street business, and that's what we're going to run". So I started off, and I wrote the first manuals for everybody and said, "Right, the first thing we've got to have is a manual and everybody's got to know how to function." And I just referenced all my old retailing manuals for that! I just wrote them out again {laughing}, the fundamentals were all written up as though they were a conventional business.

I mean all the formats that we introduced for administrative purposes and all that, I just knocked 'em off from previous stuff that I'd got. I modified them, but essentially the approach was, "This is a high street business. It's not a charitable exercise. We have to run it efficiently." And so really, I didn't ... there wasn't any CHANGE. I mean I didn't adapt, I didn't adapt to some sort of ... model, "Oh my goodness, this is completely different, I'd better be running this in some other way." I just ran it the way I would have run ANY high street shop. WITH THE SAME DISCIPLINES AS WELL! You know, we just said, even right down to the volunteers ... They all had targets from day one.

Silver Shops were built on the techniques of private sector high street retailing. The 'manual' is an important document, a codification of knowledge taken from Jean's previous employment experiences and adapted only slightly to become the bible of the new colony. This process also entailed a 'disciplining' of the current workforce, including volunteers. His use of 'even' in the final line of the quote is the only hint that volunteers are a major difference between charity and private sector retail.

The introduction of 'targets' was a crucial step taken by most Heads. It involved a fundamental challenge to what might be termed the 'voluntary attitude'. This attitude takes the view: 'whatever stock comes in, comes in; whatever volunteers turn up, turn up; whatever customers appear, appear; and whatever sales we get, we get'. From this perspective, the shop manager (if there is one) and volunteers open the shop door and put out whatever sellable stock is donated, but have very little responsibility for the level of sales in the shop. The 'voluntary' nature of the stock and labour means that the shop sales and profits are, paradoxically, involuntary, reliant only on external factors.

Jean Bilôme, along with most other second generation Heads, refuted this logic. He insisted that through their actions the shops staff exerted an influence, positive or negative, on shop sales. He thereby gave agency (and responsibility) to the shop staff for the creation of sales. Many Heads had to persuade their sceptical shop managers and volunteers, firstly, that it was necessary to increase sales (overcoming the assumption that sales do not matter), and, secondly, that it was possible (overcoming the assumption that sales were involuntary). Battles are still fought today over these issues, driven in particular by the desire of many volunteers to avoid a sense of responsibility. Many charity shop volunteers have stressed to me that they volunteer to keep busy and meet people without incurring any real responsibility.

Vivian Hodgson of Violet Hospice also treated her charity shops like private sector outlets. Here she makes a point about standards in the shops:

My honest opinion is that I treated the charity shops no differently than I treated those working for ... whoever I was with. Only the best would do, even now, my eye, if I go through the shop, is offended by an empty hanger, is offended by something that's not right, is offended by a volunteer standing with their arms folded or in their side pockets instead of behind their back, and I think the success we've made of our charity shops ... is because of that disciplining. To me if you are going to run a successful charity shop, you run it the same as if you're running Selfridges or Harvey Nicholls. No different. It doesn't matter. The quality of the stock has to be good, even if you're selling it at £2 instead of £200, it still has to reflect it, the quality has to be there.

...
More than anything else, maintaining the standards, the most important thing of all is keeping the standard going, knowing and understanding silly things like stock turn, knowing and understanding what the public want from what you are presenting.

She expresses the view that offering quality, service and value to the customer is crucial in every type of retail outlet, including charity shops. She has an 'eye' for these things and expects her volunteers to be disciplined. Both Jean and Vivian referred to the *disciplining* of volunteers, as though they were wild savages who needed civilising. There was generally a huge difference in the backgrounds and perspectives of these second generation Heads and the volunteers they had to manage. Sasha Grant of Ginger Shops found that changes he thought were simple were apparently 'radical' to some of the volunteers:

It was relatively easy to make an impact, to start to build things. But we had to go through all the classic processes of throwing out cardboard boxes, getting people to do the very basics. Let's stick a size cube on every garment! That's radical! All the very basics really. Let's improve the lighting. How can you sort and do quality control in a back room that's got one flickering fluorescent?

However, there is a sense in which this desire to treat charity shops as identical to private sector retail outlets is very much a desire, an 'attempt', a challenge perhaps, rather than a statement of reality. Heads *wanted* this to be the case. This thesis argues that this desire was an assertion of identities, a desire on the part of the Heads not to have to change who they were as retailers. It was not simply the result of rational business decision-making. In this quote, for example, Bobby Walker of Black Shops uses 'try' once and 'should' thrice:

There's no difference in charity shops compared with my commercial experience. There SHOULDN'T be. I mean, in fact, we TRY to run it as if it's a commercial enterprise – which it IS. The fact of how the staff are there or the goods are there is really irrelevant. It should still run as a shop with a clean shop-fit, tidy windows, etc. ... That should all be the SAME.

The normative nature of this quote implies that it is not so easy to treat charity shops like private sector retail units. The view that the staff and goods are irrelevant is pure wishful thinking. Indeed, retailing's own management mantra, the Three P's – Place, Product, People – points to the strangeness of wanting to get on with retailing without having to worry about staff and goods. Georgie Rogers of Turquoise Shops develops this sense of failure, or wanting something that cannot be, in both his words and tone:

I th ... {sigh, as though this was a difficult issue} ... theoRETically charity retailing shouldn't be very different. You're talking about knowing your customers. You're talking about maximising the BEST you've got of the merchandise. And you're also talking about trying to get the best possible people to OFFER that service, to sell the merchandise and

act as the link with the customers. So, you know, you did that in M&S, you do that in charity shops.

Theoretically, then, charity retailing shouldn't be different. But, he implies, in practice it is. Why does he, amongst many others, hold this theoretical position, especially when it runs counter to the large list of differences the Heads themselves identified in the previous section? There are three probable reasons. Firstly, the fact that charity shops *are actual shop units* very similar to private sector shop units caused many Heads to assume that managing them should be the same. This assumption comes from a focus on the shop as a physical geographical entity; the view that because it is 'a building on a high street that sells things' it must automatically be managed the same as other (private sector) 'buildings on high streets that sell things'. In reality, as Georgie discusses immediately after the quote above, the lack of resources to spend on capital projects and the issue of volunteers make charity shops very different to private sector shops. The reliance on donated stock is a third major difference. Charity shops might have the physical appearance of private sector high street retail units (particularly if they have been given 'professional' shopfits), they may be located next to such units, and they may sell things, but they are very different.

Secondly, Heads *wanted to believe in similarity*, because it would ensure that the skills, knowledge, techniques and expertise they had acquired in the private sector would be automatically applicable. Assuming away the differences of charity shops allowed these ex-private sector retailers to become voluntary sector retailers – their retailing identity stayed the same, only the sector as economic realm had altered. Shifting sectors *and* having to change your retailing techniques meant very little familiarity and a fundamental challenge to your identity. Moving sectors was a big jump for most of the Heads and it was made acceptable by the belief that it was not a leap into a complete unknown – these were shops, and they knew all about managing shops. If these shops were fundamentally different to the shops they had previously managed, they would feel seriously out of their depth. Hence many Heads persuaded themselves that charity shops were no different to private sector retail outlets, ignoring or forgetting all the differences identified in the previous section.

The third reason that Heads believed charity shops were identical to private sector retail outlets is that they were recruited *because* of their retail experience, validating this identity, as noted above (5.3.1). The charity shops have to be treated as retail outlets in order that this identity can be fully asserted and the charity's expectations met. To close this section, we examine two Heads that represent the extremes in this debate.

At one extreme, Chris Vaughan entered charity shops because he was an unemployed retailer who was offered the chance to head a retail organisation that had plans for rapid expansion. He noted the differences but stressed the similarities between charity and private sector retail, and adopted the stance that charity shops should be run just the same as private

sector retail outlets, with the same discipline and the same techniques. He insulated himself from the genuine differences at shop level, caused by the presence of volunteers and the reliance on donated second-hand stock, through the creation of a hierarchical retail operation run along private sector lines:

I think at the more senior level, certainly as WE are structured, the differences are much less, because most of the people we employ from area manager upward are people that have come out of commercial retailing and they therefore understand the sort of things that happen in high street commercial management. Our SHOP managers, although they're not necessarily all professional retailers, are employed, and are therefore accountable in the way that high street managers are accountable. And most of our shops have assistant managers to whom the same thing applies. So the managing of volunteers is very much on the shop floor. And it presents a sort of logistical staffing problem. It presents the problem of making sure that one has enough of them, that they are doing what you want them to do, that they're available when you want them to be available, and so on. Very much that's day-to-day part of running the shop. I wouldn't have said it makes the sort of the senior management job of running the BUSINESS of charity shops, intrinsically different.

He employed paid shop managers, assistant managers, and even shop assistants to overcome the difficulties of working with volunteers and he engaged in house-to-house collections in an attempt to better control the supply of stock. Tensions between, on the one hand, the unique nature of charity shops and their sectoral context and, on the other, the ethos of private sector retailing, were displaced away from senior management, although they resurfaced in the daily work of ShopsCom's area managers and shop managers. Issues of volunteer management were also demoted to become simply a question of 'logistics', side-stepping the genuine qualitative differences involved in managing volunteers.

Chris sees himself as a retailer; a charity retailer. As the next chapter shows, he is very keen to copy Canex, a major UK retailer related to ShopsCom. He is not unaware of the differences at shop level, and in fact argues that charity retailing is a 'purer' form of retailing. But in general he maintains his distance from charity shops because he is comfortable with hierarchical structures and is not comfortable with the shops themselves, for their voluntary elements provide a challenge to his identity as a private sector-style retailer. He has chosen not to adapt to the uniqueness of charity shops. Therefore he has moved economic realms but has not shifted his identity as a retailer; and has avoided detailed work at shop level partly to keep this part of his identity as stable as possible. He has a strong organisational identity with ShopsCom – indeed, one might suggest that he sees himself as the personification of ShopsCom – but he is quite distant from the charity. He is fairly close to the Association of Charity Shops, the club for senior charity shop managers, and sees himself at the retail-focused end of the spectrum of ACS members.

At the other extreme is Joe English of Gold Hospice Shops. She became tired of the pressures of retail and wanted a "more rewarding role". Like Chris, she took her charity shop organisation through rapid growth, though at the more limited scale of a hospice charity. Joining Gold Shops was a "tremendous culture shock" for her compared with the "rigidity" and

"speed" of her private sector retailing experiences. Unlike Chris, she embraced and accentuated the novelty of charity shops and rejected some of the assumptions of her previous life in the private sector: "It didn't take me long to learn that you couldn't go by the basic principles of high street retailing because it just didn't work. I found personally that I had to make a lot of changes to my style of management, which was quite interesting for me." She stressed the differences inherent in managing volunteers and believed they were an essential part of the organisational culture. Her approach involved a greater focus on both the 'retailing' differences created by the voluntary nature of goods and labour and the wider context of the voluntary sector itself:

At the beginning volunteers were left to their own devices. They came to us via many different sources. The most important source was really from having had connections with [Gold Hospice] on the bereavement side, and having lost a loved one, and then felt they wanted to come and give something back to the organisation by helping in some way. So they come to us for that reason. And then they come to us because if they've lost somebody, they're lonely at home and so the social element has been disrupted. And it also gives them a network of support. We are so closely connected to [Gold Hospice] that the bereavement service that clicks in after a bereavement within the family sometimes points somebody who is experiencing particular problems in our direction, because we give ongoing support WITHIN the shops environment ... They become part of a little family environment where other people who've been through similar problems and faced similar situations are able to have empathy with what they're going through.

Richard Goodall: That sounds very different from managing [in private sector] retail ... ?

Joe English: Hugely different. The whole thing is hinged on caring.

So people who have been bereaved after the death of a family member in the hospice are recruited into the shops, if they wish, as part of the bereavement counselling service offered by the hospice. The purpose of the shops thus becomes blurred – they are a place in which the actual work of the charity takes place, not just a place to make money. That is not to say the shops do not use the techniques of private sector retailing. Joe's experience of the private sector is translated into the shops, through the usual techniques of merchandising, stock rotation and so on. But her past experience does not dominate her current approach and preclude her from adapting and changing in response to the new environment in which she finds herself.

This did not make her work easy – "We get opposition all the way, it's very tough" – but it did make it more rewarding:

To be able to combine high street retailing with a local charity, whereby at the end of a working week you are able to say that all of your efforts, and everybody beneath you, actually attributed to making someone else's life a little bit more comfortable, as opposed to lining the pockets of already rich people, reaps its own rewards, is a privilege.

Joe sees herself as a charity retailer, but also identifies strongly with the Hospice and its cause. She is part of the Hospice's senior management team and her identity now is much broader than when she joined charity shops. She has a limited relationship with the ACS finding it "very useful, very helpful" and attending some meetings and conferences, but she does not identify that strongly with it. Although she is comfortable with the label 'charity

retailer', she described herself "as someone with expertise in the shops who uses them to help the charity achieves its ends." She has undertaken more of an identity shift than Chris. She has embraced her sectoral migration. Her relative adaptability might stem from her career background with many different private sector retailers, compared with Chris' long career with just one private sector retailer.

This attitude also influences her recruitment of paid middle management. Unlike most other Heads, Joe will recruit a shop manager without retail experience, because this is only desirable, not essential. It is more important:

to have a heart for what you're doing. The job is not just a job, and nearly all of our shop managers are involved in outside fundraising activities. We don't ask them to be, but they get on board with everything that is going on, which is lovely ... It's certainly rewarding when you come from the environment I did into this; it is so, so different.

The importance of employing people who 'have a heart' is very different to Chris' desire to be surrounded with private sector retailers like himself. Joe is more interested in fresh immigrants with unusual pasts who are prepared to make more than just a home from home, a melting pot of new histories, blood and ideas. This is not to criticise Chris' approach, for it has been hugely successful in financial terms and represents a very common and valid human desire for stability, given a very different environment. My point is only that, despite its dominance, his is not the only approach to making charity shops.

5.6 Shifting Concerns

Sixteen of the twenty Heads interviewed in this research joined charity shop organisations after careers in private sector retailing, and three of the other four had private sector experience from non-retail organisations. Two of the twenty are first generation Heads, 'charity people' who run a handful of shops as part of a broader senior management role and generally keep their distance from the shops. Three are 'third generation', having replaced a second generation Head. All the remainder are 'second generation' Heads, dedicated full-time to the charity shops and recruited because of their background in private sector retailing. Many of them left the private sector, particularly retailing, because of the sectoral context: pressured and ruthless organisations, ultra-competitive and inhuman interpersonal relations, and the dissatisfaction of working only for the benefit of shareholders. Very few were comfortable in this environment. The charity shops sector offered the promise of more relaxed working conditions, a relatively blank slate on which to practice retail techniques and build a new empire, a place in which 'charitability' or altruism played a part in workplace motivations, the opportunity to stay as retailers, and, for many, career progression in terms of status and responsibility, if not salary.

On entering charity shop organisations, Heads noted a number of similarities and differences between their new environment and their previous private sector experiences. Most Heads identified differences: partly because they were asked to compare, partly because charity shops really were different, and partly because they were recruited *for* their 'difference' and their new identities depended upon finding difference (in charity shops) that could be transformed (through professionalisation) into similarity (with private sector retail units).

Heads took a variety of approaches to their new world. The majority embarked upon professionalisation programmes, adapting the new world of charity shops to their expectations of what shops should be. Others spent more time adapting themselves to the new conditions, changing charity shops but also changing their own identities and developing new forms of charity retailing. Chris and Joe exemplify these two approaches. They have both been successful financially. Insulation from the uniqueness of charity shops has freed up Chris to develop powerful charity retailing techniques in ShopsCom, leading to the generation of many millions of pounds for the charity. Combining retailing techniques with voluntary sector principles has allowed Joe to develop an innovative shops operation that delivers the hospice's objectives as well as raising money.

One of the most important questions of this thesis is which of these approaches, if either, offers clues to the future of charity shop professionalisation. The argument has already been

made: that the identification processes leading to the 'retail' version of professionalisation were very successful, but may have met their limits. These identities were based on an ultimate desire for similarity between charity shops and private sector retail outlets, but also a desire for initial difference, so that there was 'work to be done'. Other versions of professionalisation focused less on the value of the specific skills of the second generation Heads and more on what these Heads can learn from volunteers and cultures of voluntarism.

Both types of professionalism relied on processes of classification, characterisation and identification. In their classifications, both worked in similar ways, distinguishing between charity shops and private sector retailing. But the two approaches characterised these two things differently: one saw it almost as something 'wrong' (to be changed as much as possible), the other characterised it as something unique (to be combined with some retailing techniques). And following this characterisation process, both approaches identified in different ways with the sector – one stressing the retailing nature of their profession, the other combining the retailing with the charity elements.

The Heads' shifts to the voluntary sector were not marked by neat 'recruitment' processes of separation, transition and incorporation into new identities. Instead new identities had to be created for a new classification – the charity retailer. These new professional identities, as ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism* demonstrates, were modified and developed in practice and marked by difference and confusion, not simply read off from existing discourses.

The professionalisation process detailed in the previous chapter, particularly that of the 1980s and early 1990s, was driven by Heads like Chris. Engaged in rapid expansion of the shop chains, these Heads became the 'big players' in a vibrantly successful sector and set the standards that others looked to emulate. This emulation is still going on, as the last of the wonderful, ramshackle 'jumble sale' shops become professionalised in some way. But, as the previous chapter also showed, a significant downturn in charity shop performance has questioned the value of continued professionalisation. The types and styles of activities implicated in the assertion of Heads' 'professional' retail identities may no longer be appropriate, at least in their current form. Different practices, based on different desires and different identities, like Joe's, may be needed if charity shops are to remain an economic success. The next chapter examines Heads' identities in more detail, particularly in relation to their organisations and sectors.

Organisations and Sectors

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Chapter Summary

This chapter draws on the three participant-observation case studies and the interviews to explore how the identity of charity shop Heads and the professionalisation process are played out through relationships with three types of organisational 'other': the parent charity of the charity shop organisation, other charity shop organisations, and private sector businesses. Rather than focus simply on the way Heads characterise the charity shops sector and their own organisations, the chapter explicitly assesses Heads' relations with these 'others' in order to more clearly illuminate their self-identity. In addition, this approach also allows us to assess whether these self-identities *vary* as they are positioned against different types of 'other'. In other words, do Heads' portrayals of their-selves, their organisations and their sector change in relation to the 'other' with which they are compared?

6.1.2 Identity

In discussing organising identities in ~ 2 ~ *Literatures: Shops, Organisation and Identity*, we suggested that 'things' have identities, just as people do. This is not to argue that things have a *sense* of their own identity, but rather that people bestow identities onto things through processes of classification and characterisation. This certainly applies to organisations and they are very commonly anthropomorphised (or reified): they are said to act, to think, to want, to need, and to have a certain identity, sometimes clumsily called 'organisational culture'. Likewise, industrial sectors (like the charity shops sector) and broader economic sectors (like the private, voluntary and state sectors) can be conceived of as having sectoral identities. This is particularly true when sectors have a degree of coherence and inter-organisational activity, such as informal inter-organisational interaction or a formal trade body.

Specifying the identity of an organisation or a sector can be a simple, classificatory act even if the classifications themselves are complex; for example the Standard Industrial Classification used by Companies House and the Inland Revenue. But often something is personally at stake for the person doing the classifying. When a charity shop Head states, 'The charity shops sector is all about people,' they are doing more than simply classifying the sector. They are *characterising* it in a specific way and making a statement about what it should be like or how it should be treated. In many cases, I suggest, such statements also represent an assertion of personal organising identity, an identification: 'This industry is all about people *and so I run this organisation with people first and foremost*'. Sectoral, organisational and personal identities should not, therefore, be seen as a nested hierarchy but rather as a complex set of relations, a strategically used 'network of identifications'. We need to be aware of the distinction between processes of classification, characterisation and identification.

6.1.3 Professionalisation

The three 'other' organisational forms examined here each offer an important element to the professionalisation story. In particular, charity shop Heads distinguish their organisations and activities from their parent charities in order to stress their professional and business-like approach. The distancing and differentiation from the *charity* through the production of professionalised charity shops can therefore be seen as the desire for both a distinct identity (I am not my charity) and a distinctive identity (I am different from my charity) which map onto levels two and three of the levels of self proposed in ~ 2 ~ *Literatures: Shops, Organisation and Identity*. Nonetheless, the chapter indicates that this is not a uniform process. A number of Heads identify closely with their charity. Both the fact and the nature of relationships with *business partners* relate to the professionalisation process. For example, attempts to demonstrate that you, as a charity shop organisation, are *more* business-like than some of the private sector businesses you work with is a powerful professionalist discourse. Similarly, portraying oneself as 'different' to private sector retailing hints at a new turn in the professionalising process, away from attempts to imitate the private sector and more focused on the acceptance and development of the distinctiveness of charity retailing. Finally, the development of a *charity shops sector* – as both a competitive and a co-operative entity – has resulted from and contributed to the professionalisation process.

6.1.4 Chapter Structure

The chapter's three sections each examine one set of relationships: with parent charities (6.2), with other charity shop operations (6.3), and with public and private sector organisations (6.4). Each details the nature of these relationships and their implications for the positioning of charity shop Heads, charity shop organisations and the charity shops sector.

6.2 Parent Charities

6.2.1 Parent and Child?

Studying relations with 'parent' charities reveals much about the cultural construction of charity shop organisations and the history of charity shop professionalisation. The term "parent charities" is commonly used within the charity shops sector to refer to the charity that owns and benefits from a shops operation. It clearly denotes an unequal relationship between the charity and its shops. The identities of charity shop organisations and Heads in relation to their parent charities are thus implicated in a set of power relations.

Charity shop identity construction in relation to parent charities also illuminate the professionalisation process. As this section demonstrates, many Heads deliberately differentiate their shops organisation from the parent charity in order to both justify and facilitate professionalisation. By 'showing' they are a business, not a charity (albeit a business working for a charity), they justify the need for and acceptability of the material practices summarised in ~ 4 ~ *Professionalisation in UK Charity Shops*.

Blume (1995: 29-31) notes that senior charity shop managers feel "hampered by interference of others in the charity who do not really understand how the shops should be run." These Heads favour a separate company because "it is quite clear where responsibility lies and it becomes easier to avoid interference on a day to day basis." The "ethos of the trading" can sit uneasily with the "moral superiority" of some charity people. These comments provide a useful pointer to the kinds of issues discussed in this section.

First we assess Heads who stress the importance of *distance* from their parent charities, as though they are grown-up children asserting their independence (6.2.2). We see how cultural and organisational 'distances' are expressions of particular identities and attitudes to professionalisation. Then we discuss the influence of *place* upon identity formation, amongst both Heads and other charity shop workers (6.2.3). Using the parent-child metaphor, it stresses the importance of both 'moving out' and 'moving back home'. We turn finally to Heads who feel *close* or want to feel closer to their parent charities and discuss the extent to which this desire represents both identity processes and the development of a quite different type of charity shop professionalisation (6.2.4). Using our metaphor, the adult child is now ready for a rapprochement with its parent.

6.2.2 Keep Your Distance

The most recent Charity Shops Survey (Goodall 2001b) shows that of 102 charities giving data, 47 ran their shops directly, 25 ran their shops through a trading subsidiary, and 30 directly ran the shops but used a trading subsidiary to handle their bought-in goods. These three legal structures are represented in the twenty organisations interviewed. Four put all their shops sales through the charity, four put all sales through a trading subsidiary, and eleven put their bought-in goods sales through a trading subsidiary (usually just a few percent of total sales) but their donated goods sales through the charity. One charity did not give information.

But while legal distance is the most clearly defined relationship between a charity and its shops, it is also the most meaningless in everyday organising. More important are the 'organisational-structural' distance and the 'cultural' distance. The former is the practical structures of management, reporting, and control in relationships between shops and their charities and it has no necessarily relationship with the legal-structural distance. 'Cultural' distance is the various preferences and habits of senior charity managers and the charity shop Heads, their knowledges, assumptions, attitudes and behaviours. The distinction between these two is arbitrary and I would not support it theoretically. It is used here because it represents the categories of the Heads themselves.

Terry Ingham of White Shops evokes the spectre of interference:

there can be an awful lot of interference from people who don't understand retailing ... As far as I'm concerned it's the greatest thing they've ever done for me, the way they set us up. So we are a limited company and we run totally separately, we have all our paperwork and everything. That's not how a lot of other hospices run ... I hear the complaints from all the others, 'Oh my chief exec won't let me do this'. I think, 'Yippee. Lucky me!' It works very well. Because we haven't got the restraints of the hospice where you've got people who don't understand retail and that's so important I think.

This desire for autonomy is reinforced by the strong perception among Heads that retailing is a specific skill that cannot be understood without significant training. Retailing is assumed by some *charity* people to be a basic function that anyone can perform. For the 'professional' retailers running charity shops, such a view is very threatening. The desire for organisational distance is based on a need for self-control and the space to be a professional without having one's knowledge, skills and professionalism questioned. This is best seen as selfhood at level three of the five levels introduced earlier, a sense that 'retailer' is a distinct identity with certain distinguishing characteristics based on knowledges, skills and experience. The maintenance of this *characterisation* of retailing is necessary for your successful *identification* with it.

Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom also refers to the expertise of retailing:

I think one of things we very consciously did when we started the [shops] was to say, "Our job is retailing, not general fundraising. Somebody else's job is general fundraising" ... I don't pretend to know their business in detail any more than I would expect them to know our business in detail. And it seems to me that you have a general

knowledge of what other people do, you know how it fits together, but at the end of the day they're there because they're experts in that particular field.

His generous portrayal of a charity 'them' who are experts in 'their' field, with a business that he does not know in detail is a modest way of saying that he is an expert in his field. Expertise is a key aspect of identity and Chris's comments represent a territorialisation of knowledges complete with a sense of ownership of these territories. This is also represented in the organisational structures. ShopsCom is an example of a charity shop organisation maintaining considerable organisational-structural distance from the parent charity, even though legally they are integrated with the charity. Chris Vaughan takes pride in this structure:

a bit like a subsidiary company ... totally self-sufficient in terms of resources, accounting, computers, personnel management, training, everything. I mean we hardly ... look to our head office for any management support at all. A little bit in communications and public relations, but almost negligible.

Kim Noakes of Orange Shops is less cryptic than Chris in classifying different knowledges:

I think retailing is a specific science and I think appeals and marketing ... is a specific science and I don't think they necessarily work that well together. I think priorities are different.

This is an important point. Charity shops are similar to appeals and marketing in that all three ask for donations from the public. Yet, once they have their donations, charity shops must undertake a significant set of further processes – selling the donated goods – in order to actually generate cash funds for the charity. Most of the work and talk and thinking of charity shop Heads focuses on this 'conversion' work, and a smaller (though not insignificant) amount of effort is expended on soliciting donations. In other words, most charity shop Heads focus on the 'retailing' side of their business rather than the 'charity' side of their business, which is very much a focus of their backgrounds and their personal senses of identity.

There was a strong sense amongst the Heads that charity shop organising is a more 'professional' activity than the other work of the charity. Nicky Legge, Head of Purple Shops, actively discourages links between local groups of the charity and local shops "because it can be an absolute disaster". He pinpoints the professionalism and profit-motivation of the shops as the main factor behind the distancing: "You get the local fundraising group wanting to take control of the shop, but they don't like the professional profit-orientated side of it, so you have this constant conflict."

The profit motivation is an essential characteristic of most charity shop Heads. One expression of this is the fact that most Heads make only token efforts to publicise the charity through the shops: a few leaflets on a rack at the back of the shop. They want the customers to remember

the shop not because of the work done in this or that area of charitable work but as the shop where the staff are friendliest, the environment is brightest, and the stock is of the highest quality, best choice and best value. Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom, states his terms of reference categorically:

My terms of reference are as follows:

- ◊ *to make as much money as possible for the charity,*
- ◊ *to project a business-like image on behalf of the charity,*
- ◊ *to act as a contact point with the public.*

In that order, if I'm asked. Fundraising is not what I'm good at.

I suggest these are as much his 'list of preferences' as his terms of reference. The shops do contain leaflets about the charity and its work, but Chris argues that space is physically limited within the shop and any attempt to replace retail space with promotions for the charity simply leads to lower sales, undermining his primary term of reference.

His own identity – 'not good at fundraising' – is both a result of and justification for this minimalist engagement with the charity. Indeed, the view that 'the money comes first' is at the centre of the charity shop professionalisation project. According to this perspective, the interests of the charity are met best by raising as much money as possible, even if this means reducing the ability of the shops to promote the charity and its work. This particular perspective is, I argue, powerfully related to the Heads' private sector backgrounds in which they developed their habitual sense that maximising profit should be the primary organisational goal. In charity shop organising, 'profit-maximisation' is clearly one option amongst a number of possible goals, alongside maximising the chance of every donated item to be sold for re-use, minimising prices, maximising sales volume, minimising costs, maximising awareness of the charity's brand, and maximising opportunities for volunteering. 'Profit-maximisation' is not, therefore, an inevitable goal of charity shops. It must have been *chosen* by the Heads. However, in all the interviews and case studies with Heads who adopted this particular approach to professionalisation, no mention was ever made of this as a choice. Profit maximisation was simply assumed. For many of the Heads, then, professionalisation was less a conscious choice than a habitual, cultural practice; less a rational decision than an expression of cultural identity.

This habitual, cultural identity also differs from the cultural practices of the charity. Charity shop Heads have a greater desire to get things done rapidly and are less interested in "political correctness" (Nicky Legge). Sasha Grant links the focus on making money in Ginger Shops with the impatience of *shops* staff, relative to the *charity* staff:

One of my [shops] team, when he joined [the organisation], was told by a charity person, "Don't worry too much about making money, you're here to raise profile". I thought, "What?! That's garbage! We're here to raise money!" [In retail] we're very task orientated, it's kind of, "Oh retail! They want things done by next Monday or yesterday". I think [the charity's] workers get away with things we [in retail] don't because we're quite pushy. If we want something done, let's get the damned thing done, we don't want to faff around. So they probably see us as impatient.

Nicky Legge of Purple Shops has no doubt that charity shops are commercial businesses and very different to their parents:

The [charity] has been very good to me, they've allowed me my head, they've given me great autonomy and I respect that, and thus I think it has forged a good relationship. I know that's not always the case with a lot of other charities. They want a greater control of the chains, which doesn't work because of the cultural differences. We are retailers. It's commercial. Charity is charity, it's a different world, a different culture. We are not overly PC, we are business people. The charity world is immersed in political correctness ... We're commercial retailers, the charity is charity, and they're different people, they don't cross over very easily.

This is a powerful expression of the differences between charities and shops and the distinct identity of charity shop people. Jean Bilôme, Head of Silver Shops, refers to both speed and employment practices:

I'm accustomed to commercial disciplines. I was applying them in shops and I upset some of the people around me because they just weren't ready and weren't very accepting of the fact that I would be a little bit ... how shall we say ... not cavalier but aggressive on the recruitment and staffing front. And I would be keen to see the back of people that weren't performing, all that kind of stuff, you know. And I'd be much more demanding. They weren't accustomed to needing to do things in a hurry and getting things done quickly and efficiently and so on, and there was a cultural problem there. There's no question that I clashed with one or two people. But culturally it was ... there was also this problem ... the needs of a BUSINESS within a charity.

Sasha Grant also referred to employment practices, comparing the 'business' style of the Ginger Shops with the "social care principles" operated by the rest of the charity. Again this difference in style was learnt in the private sector and brought to the charity sector and again Sasha was attached to this identity and unwilling to change. Interestingly Jean Bilôme believes the organising culture he developed in the charity shops ended up altering the culture of the whole charity:

I think in most cases what the business culture has done, the success of charity shops has almost certainly done, for Silver Charity is generally improve the approach to management that is deployed by a lot of service functions, for example accounts, personnel, design, communications. Generally the service support facilities are sharper than I think they would have been. The business culture has permeated from the shops into the charity. Because the shops have become so big, they deploy so many resources, and those resources have got to be to a certain standard, and we've gradually won the day. Changed from being small, relatively insignificant, "Oh, they're just a bolshy little bunch of .. ignore them, try to put them down if you can," to being unignorable. And I think that the main effect has been that I have in fact changed the culture by forcing it through. Not the other way around. The idea that the charity, as a structure, it's impermeable, it's there as a sort of great monolith and has this little side line in charity shops that are not impacting .. it just isn't so .. Generally, where charity shops have got big, they now have almost CERTAINLY changed the culture.

In this narrative, the 'professional' identity of the charity shop Head, learnt in a private sector background, remains constant and forces the charity to adapt and professionalise.

Jean believes Silver Charity once characterised his shops as insignificant and bolshy. This is about the crucial issue of status. While the charity shop Heads often felt they were more professional than their charity counterparts, because of their private sector backgrounds, they also often felt ignored and unappreciated by the charity. This was most passionately expressed by Susan Parker, Head of HospiShop:

The shops are incredibly successful. Right? INCREDIBLY successful. And it's stable money, it's there week in, week out. And it's going up all the time... It can be demotivating when, in fundraising, three members of staff can work on a function for six months. The function happens and they raise five thousand pounds. And I think, "Well that's like half a week's shop takings".

*...
I just feel, you know, the shops are out there and they get forgotten. And every now and then I sort of have to have these battles to remind people just how much money the shops are bringing in... I want shops to have a higher profile. They should be spoken of in hallowed terms.*

Susan believes this lack of appreciation is related to fundamental cultural differences in organising practices. However, unlike the other Heads discussed so far in this section, she sees the charity as more professional than the shops. This is not to say she thinks the charity is better than the shops. On the contrary, she takes a general anti-professional stance. For her, the 'professionalism' involves clock-watching and treating your work just like any other job. This is totally different to the passion and energy of her often elderly shop managers and volunteers who, although ostensibly in the 'business' environment of a shop, do not treat what they do as just a job. Susan also suggests that shops are not valued as they should be because they are associated with 'charity':

The social workers wouldn't let any of the nurses, doctors or volunteers wear sunflowers (the hospice's fundraising 'badge') in front of the patients or their families. It stresses it is a hospice, but hides the fact it is a charity. There is a desire to protect patients from the knowledge that they are 'charity cases'. Charity is dirty, and charity shops the dirtiest of all.

The idea that there is something dirty about charity shops is a powerful driver of cultural difference between shops and the hospice and a key element in understanding the identities of charity shop Heads. Disgust is a powerful emotion. People see charity shops as dirty because 'trade' and 'retail' are 'dirty' activities and because of the second-hand goods. Each of these can generate strong feelings alone. The combined effect is even greater. Susan Parker sums this up well:

It's a dirty job and I can see why most people turn their noses up at it. I mean a LOT of people do, even within the hospice. Within the hospice the culture is that the shops are seen as something sort of 'trade' - AND 'second-hand trade'; you can't get anything worse! In fact, it's just such a brilliant environment. It's addictive and I love it!

This indicates a powerful identification with the actual work of her charity shops, rather than simply with the notion of charity retail or with charity shop organising. This is partly a function of

the small size of HospiShop. However, while she was not the only Head of a small charity shop organisation, she was the only one to be so passionate about the work of actual shops. She took a sceptical view of charity shop management, offering an implicit critique of the dominant charity shop professionalisation process, as the next chapter investigates in detail.

Sasha Grant also notes that his charity shops are seen as dirty:

sometimes there's a dirtiness about making money, flogging things to make money, selling all this trash and treasure and turning it into funds ... When I joined, the shops department had the credibility of the local leper colony.

None of the charity shop Heads feel they are worse people than their charity counterparts and many of them think their financial focus, business acumen, and retail professionalism makes them more valuable to the charity than many of the charity staff. But many Heads also keenly feel that people in the charity value the shops operation less highly than they should, partly because it is 'trade', partly because it deals in second-hand goods, and partly because of the focus on money. Where charities are very reliant on their shops' income, this is less the case, but many Heads have to maintain their status and identity by resisting the characterisations that their charities impose upon them.

6.2.3 Your Place Or Mine?

Identities in charity shop organisations are influenced by physical locations. All charity shop organisations have a physical relationship with (distance from or closeness to) their parent charity. ShopsCom has its own physically separated shops head office. The Orange Shops' office is on a different floor to the charity but in the same building. Physical distance tends to reinforce both organisational and cultural distances, but there is not necessarily a simple linear relationship between these.

The physical location of the shop head office has an important influence on the relationship between the Head of shops and the senior management of the charity proper. HospiShop operates from within the hospice building, physically very close to its 'parent charity'. Susan, Head of shops, works just metres away from hospice patients, the charity's direct beneficiaries. The shops 'office' is one half of a smallish office shared with fundraising. Physical integration was also evident in the store room and the office kitchen.

After finishing our coffees (I'd met a doctor in the kitchen while making them) we went down to the basement store room to collect some bin liners. The store room was half-filled with medical stuff, a quarter-filled with fundraising stuff, and a quarter-filled with stuff for the shops. Plastic sunflowers, ribbons, wheelchairs, till rolls, old poetry books, bags of second-hand bric-a-brac and all manner of strange chrome and plastic medical instruments were cheek by jowl. It struck me how close the shops are to the rest of the charity in its office space

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and store room, and how this mirrors the closeness of the line management structure.

One effect of this is actually to heighten tensions between the shops and the hospice, as Susan indicated above in reference to the charity's perception of the shops as dirty and of little value. Whilst Susan identifies with the Hospice, she feels the Hospice does not identify with the shops, because of their dirtiness (money focused and dealing in second-hand goods) and their distance. This makes the interesting point that identifications can have a *mutual* element, as in the phrase 'identifying with each other', and that these mutual identifications need not be equal.

Sam Jones, Head of SkyBlue Shops, is also based at her hospice's head office and feels this increases her identification with the charity. Further, she notes that physical distance between the actual shop units (not the shops office) and the hospice has a positive impact on volunteer numbers:

Whilst it's a separate trading company, we are part of the hospice and I try and reiterate how important the volunteers' contribution is. You will get volunteers, because they've been poorly or their husband died here, who don't particularly want to work here [in the hospice] but will work in the shops. They want to contribute, but not necessarily in the hospice itself, because it will bring back bad memories. So they do it in what they see as a slightly more remote way, in the shops.

This physical distance between the shops and the shops office/hospice offers an emotional distance, for volunteers, from memory or painful emotions about their own health. Thus spatial distance can avoid temporal closeness, through association, with feelings they wish to avoid.

This example also reminds us that 'the shops' contains at least two physically distinct types of location – the shops head office and the shops themselves. Even if the shops head office is fully integrated with the charity, the shops themselves are almost always physically distant (and often distant in terms of culture and control). Gregson *et al* (2002) refer to this as displacement.

Actual charity shops tend to be powerful sources of attachment for those working in them. Terry Ingham discusses here how place-based identities and cultures develop in White Shops:

We have a volunteers party for shop volunteers once a year. We ship them in to the Village Hall because there are a lot of them and also we wouldn't necessarily want to use the hall in the actual hospice. They do feel that identity with the shops and we protect that. They know the hospice is what they want to support and they know they're supporting it, but they don't actually feel part of it ... They start off, when they come, because it's the hospice charity and they want to help. But within a very short space of time they're actually working for the manager, and it's the manager who makes it ... They haven't lost sight of the hospice, but that's not who they relate to. The shop is theirs, and they are part of the shop.

Of course, identities to places are often shorthand for identities with a group of people who live, work or meet in that place. The physical dispersion of the shops thus creates cultural attachment to them rather than the hospice. This works in similar ways for regional and area managers, those middle managers who are responsible for a number of shops in a specific geographical area. For them, there is an identification both with the geographical area – its towns, villages, roads and streets – and with the actual shops they manage.

Places, then, are a very popular unit or concept around which to build an identity, mainly because they have physicality and easily classified borders. Heads located further from their charity's head office are likely to stress their shop identity more strongly, and vice versa. This might well impact upon the professionalisation process. The two shops organisations with 'very high' costs (crudely, high professionalisation) in the interview sample are physically separated from their charities (see Table 3.2 in ~ 3 ~ *Research and Methodology*). All those with 'low' costs (crudely, low professionalisation) are located with their charity. Whilst place cannot determine the identifications of the Heads or the professionalisation of their shops, it is nonetheless an important potential influence. And the strong identifications of staff and volunteers to their own shops rather than to their charity shop organisation is one important source of resistance against the Heads and the attempts to professionalise.

6.2.4 Move Closer

Not all Heads want to feel separated from their charities. Vivian Hodgson runs both the shops and the fundraising for Violet Hospice, so they are embodied within the single person. She is extremely happy with this arrangement and enjoys the symbiosis between the shops and fundraising:

I am in charge of fundraising AND retail shops and this means the shops are working towards fundraising and fundraising helps towards the shops. You've got nobody tearing their hair out because you have one person at the top and everybody underneath, maybe working in different sections, but that one person brings everyone together. I personally think anyone who does it differently is mad.

Here there is no problem with the mutual identification of shops and fundraising, for their singular embodiment is enough to unite these normally separate things into one being. This has practical advantages because both fundraising methods (appeals and shops) can support each other. For example, the charity shops were used to recruit customers to take part in a sponsored hike for the charity, and the hike was used to publicise the shops and encourage donations and custom. The divisions between 'retailing' and 'charity' are non-existent and the professionalisation of her shops has a distinct 'charity' flavour, counter to the retail focus of most shop organisations.

This 'charity flavour' is also found at VolShop, which is a separate shops department integrated within the charity. This is not a case of physical location. Eve Turner, Head of VolShop, works from home. But organisationally she is within a department of the main charity. Under her lead, the shops organisation very consciously attempts to follow through the charity's stated values (such as 'furthering volunteering') in its work. This does not necessarily help the shops maximise their income, but Eve stresses that "charity is not just about money – this organisation puts volunteering at the heart of its core values".

A practical example of the closeness of the shops to the charity is campaigns. Apparently, campaigns are new for the charity. Shops are being used strongly to develop this new campaigning focus, are not left out of it, as they were at ShopsCom. Some of the actual shops seemed pretty resistant to this, though. They wanted to play shops, not get involved in "this campaigning stuff" [Carla].

Eve worked hard to try to create this synergy between VolShop and the charity. She believes in volunteering as an end and she has a strong sense that she is a charity professional, which is much more than a simple retail professional. We will explore her identifications in detail in ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism*.

In HospiShop the synergy occurred not through initiative from the Head of shops but rather at shop level itself, almost effortlessly:

We collected trays of bric-a-brac that had been specially selected and priced by the shop volunteers and took them to the van. They were for the fundraising department's stall at the local carnival. What the carnival stall didn't want or couldn't sell would then go on to Margaret at [another shop].

So the relations between shops and charity are very close in HospiShop, especially from this shop. The shops know about the carnival and that there is a fundraising stall there. The goods pass from shops to fundraising and back to another shop. This would never happen at ShopsCom! The shop volunteers do the pricing, though, for the fundraising stall; don't leave it for the stall holders or fundraising department to do! Pricing goods is their area of expertise.

In this scenario, the shop volunteers identify very strongly with the hospice rather than just with their own shop. Without Susan having to do anything, the shops work for the fundraising department. Again, as with Susan, the shops identify with the hospice, but, it seems, the hospice doesn't identify with the shops – a week later, back at the same shop:

I overheard [the volunteer shop managers] complaining that the fundraising people "Did not even say thank you!" for all the priced bric-a-brac the shop had prepared. There was consternation in the back room and people began muttering about 'the people at the hospice'.

Again, therefore, shops are seen to want to get closer to the charity but do not feel sufficiently respected. The physical dispersion of shops means they are 'out of sight and out mind', a point developed by Ashley March, Head of Navy Shops. He is passionate about "bringing the shops back into the hospice", as well as "taking the hospice out to the shops", forcing the two closer together. Communication plays a significant role in this:

We're actually quite cut off at some levels, in the sense that shops is something which is geographically away from the hospice ... Part of my function has been to rattle cages and bring the shops very much back into front of mind of hospice people. We've done that through having notice boards around the hospice saying, 'Shops achieved this last week. Our biggest sale was this. Pam did X, Joan did that', and people think, 'Oh we didn't know this'. So in a sense we're bringing the shops back into the hospice. The other side of it, I'm always taking the hospice out into the shops ... Basically [Navy] is a very powerful brand name. You walk into my charity shops at this moment in time and people don't recognise [Navy], it's not thrust down your throat. I don't mean to thrust it down people's throat, but I mean to make it available as [Navy] and people can ask questions if they want to. So there had been some divorce between the two historically, but now we're mending that bridge because it's important that shops are seen as part of the hospice.

Ashley refers to the importance of using a single image or brand for both Navy Hospice and Navy Shops. One of the key reasons for ensuring the shops and the charity are *not* split by cultural difference, or do not appear to be, is the fact that members of the public view shops and charity as the same thing. The very visibility of the shops, their physical presence and their high street positions, makes them the most important physical manifestation of the charity in the eyes of the public.

Some Heads are aware of this public perception and do their best to overcome any cultural differences between the shops and the charity. Vivian Hodgson, for example, explains how her background as a volunteer bereavement counsellor for Violet Hospice has deepened her understanding of the need to treat the shops and the hospice as one organisation:

The image of the hospice is very important. Having worked as a volunteer in the hospice and done all my bereavement training, and understanding what it was I was representing, and knowing the work that was involved by our nurses, knowing the sadness involved by our bereaved and knowing the agony sometimes of our patients, made me want to succeed even more in making that reflect through the shops. It has to reflect that we are a caring organisation. Don't forget we're a business as well, but we have to reflect the charity that we're actually working for.

The charity shop Heads and organisations in this sub-section therefore offer alternative visions of charity shop professionalisation. In VolShop developing volunteering is seen as a professional goal for a professional Head of a professional charity shop organisation. In HospiShop, both the Head and the shops identify closely with the hospice (even if this identification is not returned) in a wholesale rejection of professionalisation. In Navy Hospice, Ashley March has two projects: to brand the charity in the shops rather than treat them only as retail outlets; and to collapse the distance of the shops from the hospice by making communication about the shops visible and present in the hospice building. And in Violet Hospice, the charity and shops are integrated in one person and professionalisation is seen as the ability to use fundraising and shops to each others' mutual advantage. This is a long way from seeing them as distinct 'sciences' or 'cultures' to be kept as far apart as possible.

6.2.5 Parent Charities

A charity shop organisation's relationship with its parent charity is one very important component of its 'organisational identity', its sense of organisational self. Such organisational

selves are intimately related to the personal senses of self expressed by the charity shop Heads. Personal and organisational identities are also strongly related to issues of professionalisation, a term hiding a wide variety of attitudes rather than a single project.

The identity processes studied in this section have included classification, characterisations and identifications. Most have been at level three in my proposed levels of selfhood – the sense that one's self is distinctive and different from the selves of others. The private sector backgrounds of many of the Heads is a key source of their habitual assumptions, behaviour and attitudes – or cultural identifications – and have played an important role in driving the dominant professionalisation process. The Heads all feel they are as good at their jobs as those working in the charity. Some stress their personal differences from those in the charity – more professional, more demanding, more profit-motivated, less politically correct – and map these directly onto organisational identities and differences between the shops and the charity, wanting to keep a distance. Others feel the charity sees the shops as different or, worse, does not see them at all, but believe the shops are important and valuable and should move closer to the charity. This latter group offers alternatives to the dominant type of charity shop professionalisation, some rejecting professionalisation altogether, most recasting it as about volunteers or caring instead of (or as much as) about retailing.

6.3 'The Sector'

6.3.1 Identifying 'Sector'

This section investigates the intra-sectoral positioning of charity shop organisations and the relations they have with each other. The notion that the charity shops sector *is* a sector (a particular industry) relies on the sense that it consists of a group of like organisations with like products. This 'likeness' requires a classification process, while charity shop Heads saying they are part of a sector is an identification. When they try to define the sort of sector it should be, they are engaged in (sometimes competing) characterisation processes.

Sectors contextualise organisations and are a key source of the 'others' against which organisational selves are defined. Watching and listening to one's colleagues and competitors at sector meetings develops your own understanding of what types of senior managers (and organising styles) exist in your sector and, consequently, what type of senior manager you are, are not, and could be. Sectors are thus a frame for the construction of (inter-related) personal and organisational identities, a place where possibilities and alternatives are displayed, categorised, adopted, adapted, and rejected.

All charity shop organisations encountered in the research viewed themselves as part of the charity shops sector, which was also always seen as a subset of the voluntary sector. A substantial minority also saw themselves as part of the retailing sector. This section focuses on the sectoral relations of charity shop organisations in relation to the identities of the Heads and the professionalisation process. One of the most important aspects of the dominant professionalisation process is the attitude to competition. These attitudes are still being developed and there is a wide diversity of views. First we examine these attitudes to competition (6.3.2), then the issue of 'self-assessment', or identity status (6.3.3), then co-operation (6.3.4) and finally the notion of co-operating competitors (6.3.5).

6.3.2 Competition

I first present a selection of these diverse views, then analyse the implications of competition for Heads' identities. Jean Bilôme held the toughest views on charity shop competition:

We're in competition with other charities. Let's not mince our words, they're competitors. And we want to outgun them on the high street if we can. I just think, let's all do our own thing, let's look at each other, let's compete, let's be aggressive, let's try and outgun each other. That way the sector sharpens up, it stays good, it stays efficient, it stays NEEDED. And it will modify itself quickly to change. So I'm very much in favour of a very competitive environment.

RG: Identical to commercial competition?

JB: Yeah, sure. Sure. Absolutely. Because this idea that charities shouldn't be fighting with each other is bunkum, you know, we're all desperately fighting with each other for funds. Or in charity shops, fighting instead for customers.

Danny Updike also takes a tough line, believing that it is only the Heads' fear of public perceptions that stops them releasing their full competitive energies:

I think there are some inhibitions about charities actually being bloody-minded in that respect. It's difficult to think through the consequences if you decide to target very aggressively one of your competitors. If you're British Airways and you want to take Virgin out of the market, then, you know, you'll use whatever tactics might be appropriate. And at the end of the day, your customers are not really too worried about whether there's been dirty tricks with Branson, or whatever. They just want a cheap flight to New York ... I think that most charity shop customers DON'T give a damn, but I think there's still some concern about 'Hey, what are we going to lose if customers see us acting too aggressively?'

Danny is also quite concerned about the future (remember the interviews were conducted just as the downturn in charity shop performance began):

In the next few years I think it's likely to become a more and more difficult market, very crowded, and so the temptation for a large aggressive charity to say, "Right, we're going to take out somebody by actually targeting them and competing with them until the blood runs from every pore," is actually going to be quite powerful. We've all invested a lot of money. And we all have jobs to protect. And I think that if we're not careful we could get into quite a messy arena. At the moment relationships are good. I don't necessarily see that as being the future.

Nicky Legge sees competition as "healthy":

I think it is good. It ensures that charity retailing becomes as professional as it can be, because the non-professional charities won't survive. That does break down a little bit within the charity retailing sector, because at the root of performance you have chief execs and senior management, and if they're prepared to put up with less than acceptable standards and returns, then what do you do? So the sector doesn't necessarily regulate its professionalism, just as a retail chain. But I think that's what the NGO survey is about [the Charity Finance Charity Shops Survey]. It provides quantifiable measurable evidence for senior execs to say, 'Look, that chain over there takes that and we don't. I'm not happy with that' ... Competition ensures professionalism, it ensures only the best will be around, and it keeps us pushing to be better and better, and I think that's needed. It keeps everyone on their toes.

He feels that charity chief executives are too soft on their charity shop chains, failing to demand of their shops what shareholders of a commercial retailer would demand. Here there is a strong relationship between professionalism and competition. Some see competitiveness as both an expression of professionalism and a way of becoming more professional. The metaphor is that of a player in a game where the competitive spirit drives improvements in performance.

Bobby Walker also argues that charity shop competition is "healthy" and ensures continual improvement. But he believes it is a positive and important difference that charity shops are not subject to the gross demands of "shareholders, capitalists, the evil bloodsuckers." Chris Vaughan believes that there are limits to charity shop competition precisely because of the 'charity' context:

I think one sees charity shops down there on the high street as competitors, but equally one hopefully respects the fact that they're competitors also raising money for a good cause ... If you're a commercial retailer and you're so successful you beat all your rivals into the ground you think you've done rather well, whereas if you did that in charity retailing you might have a pang of conscience {laughing}.

He describes the relationship between different charity shop Heads as one of "friendly rivalry". In a similar tone, Andy Young stresses a key difference of charity retailing – the lack of the 'monopoly principle':

I think everyone is still in business to beat their competitors but they're not necessarily interested in beating them into a hole ... They want to be the best, but they're not necessarily interested in seeing other people going by the wayside, whereas in the commercial sector your primary objective is to shut down your competitors because you want to be the sole supplier of your service in the country ... I suppose ultimately it's less cut-throat, it's a slightly more balanced view.

This implies that cut-throat competition is somewhat 'unbalanced'. Echoing Chris' sense of 'friendly rivalry' Andy remarks that apparent friendliness can also be a competitive tool:

People are kind of happy to see the other people alongside them as long as you're doing better than them. And if you're not, it helps to be friendly 'cos you might find out why they're doing better, which is something it's harder to obtain in the commercial sector.

Here, charity retailers' identities are seen to stress the 'charity' aspect and the *difference* of *charity* retailing, even people like Chris who usually accent the similarities. There is a somewhat naïve hope that there is room for everyone in the charity shop market, and perhaps a fear of losing to others. Certainly, Chris and Andy were soon to register very poor financial results.

The most intense competitive spirit came not from a Head of shops, but from Jane, the boss of Susan Parker, Head of HospiShop. This example shows how identification with your organisation, can lead to powerful behaviour. When I met Jane for the first time I mentioned how well the shops business was doing and received a lecture: "The shops operation is not in ANY way a business and that is a moral position. We are a charity!" I found it interesting that organisations can be categorised using 'moral' criteria and I respected her view and her moral commitment to it. This 'moral commitment' made Jane's subsequent displays of intense competitiveness all the more surprising.

Firstly, in the same meeting, Susan showed to Jane HospiShop's annual figures alongside the *NGO Finance Charity Shops Survey* for the year. Jane pored over the figures, looking closely at a number of 'key competitor' hospices. There is a common agreement that hospices limit their shop operations to the medical referral areas that relate to the hospices. Therefore there should be no 'real' competition between hospices. But Jane was very happy when HospiShop outperformed one of these competitors. She also questioned the accuracy of the figures of a competitor that beat HospiShop. Only one of these competitors was a neighbouring hospice; all the rest were hospices around the country. Jane was clearly competing against them 'for fun' in the sense that in reality her shops do not compete with theirs for customers, donors or sites. The competition was a measuring of status and organisational and personal value and one could easily imagine Jane sitting at a meeting with the chief executives of other hospices, gloating over her hospice's shops figures.

Secondly, I heard later about one of Jane's "escapades".

Susan told me a story about Jane following the neighbouring hospice's van for miles across HospiShop's 'territory' before it stopped within the territory at a friend or relative of someone who'd died at the neighbouring hospice. Jane had screamed at the van drivers, who didn't know what to make of this mad woman.

Susan found this story hilarious. People are allowed to donate freely to whoever and whatever they wish, regardless of where they live, she laughed. And if someone had died at the neighbouring hospice and left her estate to that hospice, how could Jane complain?

It seems incongruous for someone to be so intensely committed to the statement that her organisation is a charity and not a business and yet so aggressive with her neighbours. Why do we have this sense of incongruity? It is because we do not associate 'charity' with competitiveness. Charity is about 'helping others' and competitiveness is about 'helping yourself at the expense of others', or at least about 'beating others'. But Jane is living proof that these things can go together. The answer to the apparent conundrum lies in the 'others' that one wants to help or beat, for 'others' are not an undifferentiated mass. There are those others that HospiShop is set up to help – people in HospiShop's area that need palliative care – and those others that HospiShop, or at least Jane, wants to beat – other hospices. If she can beat them, competitively, but without harming them, then she is doing very well at meeting the needs of her clients. In other words, the competitive instinct can be harnessed to drive forward the 'charitable' aspects of the organisation. By playing the game of 'beat my neighbour' the hospice can achieve the best results for its own clients.

Discomfort remains, however, when the hospice helps itself *at the expense of other hospices*. In this scenario the hospice is helping its own clients only by hurting the clients of other hospices. To be this territorial, to help your own but damn the rest, would stand against the inclusive aspects of charity and would privilege arbitrary geographies over the desire to help others. Jane's attitude is somewhere between these two approaches, the first desirable, the second uncomfortable. To feel competitive with other hospices around the country and to feel excited by the success of your shops is a positive demonstration of commitment to the cause and the organisation. It can drive up standards of charitable care. To wish to take the donations or customers from a neighbouring hospice by competing at their expense seems to demonstrate an excessive attachment to your own organisation rather than to the 'movement' or cause to which your organisations belongs. This demonstrates that identification can be a powerful driver.

6.3.3 Self-Assessment

Charity shop organisations can measure their relative success, their competitive position, using the annual Charity Shops Survey (CSS), referred to as "the NGO survey" by Nicky Legge

above. At the centre of each CSS is a league table of charity shop performance. This ranks all charity shops by their total sales (1993 to 1999) or their total profit (2000 to 2001) for the previous year. Heads can and do get excited about their position on the table. Indeed, the 2001 survey reported that: "Richard Taylor, head of retail for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, jokes that beating British Heart Foundation in the Charity Finance league table had been one of his goals for the year" (Goodall 2001b: 44). The results of the league table were traditionally presented before the magazine article was published at the annual charity shops conference, run by the Charities Advisory Trust (1993 to 1999) and the Association of Charity Shops (2000 to 2001) and one of the main excitements of these conferences was the revealing of the league table; seeing where you and your competitors came. The first Charity Shop Awards, a 2001 innovation, created even more excitement and some controversy (Goodall 2001c).

One of the main themes in understanding both competition and co-operation is the importance of personal identity. For some Heads, finding out how well their shops perform in comparison with others is an evaluation of their personal value or status. 'How well are we doing?' transmutes very easily into 'How good am I as a person?' This is not to say that competition is always personalised. It often consists of practical retailing considerations such as the price, choice and quality of stock and the location of the shop. But charity shop organisations find it very difficult to differentiate their shops from each other, mainly because of their dependence on unpredictable stock and the limited room for price differences. The similarity of charity shops was mentioned by a number of Heads. Ashley March feels his shops have "a unique selling proposition" because they are community shops providing a service to the local community that they support. But most Heads agree with Kim Noakes:

I think one of the real difficulties is that any charity shop is like any other charity shop and there isn't quite enough unique selling proposition.

This has more implications than the functional, financial, and practical retailing aspects of charity shop organising and competition. One of the 'real difficulties' for Kim Noakes is being unable to feel that his shops are marked with his particular, unique, individual 'stamp'. Running a chain of charity shops contains a strong element of personal identity – they are *your* shops and you want them to reflect *you* as a person. This almost inevitably means that you want them to be different from the shops of others, particularly if you have been persuaded of the questionable and dogmatic view that customers want differentiation. If all charity shops are the same, where do you fit in? Where are you in the picture? Where is the evidence of your influence and individuality? Where have your creativity and skilfulness been used? Heads push differentiation in their chains, therefore, for personal as well as business reasons.

Evidence for this comes from Chris of ShopsCom. He admitted that on first looking at charity shops he was:

rather cautious about getting involved at all, because I felt that at that time they were a very secondary, if not tertiary {slight laugh}, form of retailing. Most of them were pretty scruffy, were in back streets, were NOT very professionally managed.

This "scruffy" and "tertiary" form of retailing was a challenge to his identity as a professional retailer with a certain status, and he avoided being sullied by their negative associations through the construction of a hierarchical charity shop organisation. He distanced himself from the actual shops so that his working environment is very simple and focused on retailing and organisational structuring and control: a charity retail head office. Charlie French, Head of Yellow Shops, produces more evidence for this argument:

Creative swiping is stealing others ideas. Whatever Yellow Shops comes up with (and I like to think we are constantly trying to come up with new initiatives, different ways of doing things, in this quest, this mission for differentiation, and never standing still) it will be creatively swiped within 6-12 months, and I can quote our shop-fit, our staffing structures, some of the gifts-in-kind initiatives, our events, our window equipment. What actually results is 'me too'-ing, so you're actually talking about lack of differentiation. You've got to be innovating all the time, constant renewal, constant reinvention. That is the hallmark of our business, this industry, this sector. It is so easy to be a 'me too' because the product is a staple product.

He associates business differentiation with personal individualism. Keith, one of the senior managers at ShopsCom, was a little more bullish, believing that other charity Heads copied ShopsCom, not vice versa.

Keith notes that others have copied ShopsCom: "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," he beamed. He clearly identifies with ShopsCom and is happy here. "We have been very, very successful with our formula." But he complained that it's become more competitive and the others are more competition for us than they used to be. There are big pressures, especially on donated stock. "But I'm not worried," he concluded, "There are still big profits to be taken."

He sees ShopsCom as the leader in the market and accuses the other charities of playing 'follow the leader'. This has led to 'samey' shops and more intense competition. Jean Bilôme, however, suggests there has been a convergence around a certain way of running charity shops simply because this is the best way to do it:

everybody was getting going on fairly major expansions ten, fifteen years ago, and we've all sort of done our own thing a bit. I think we've all ended up more or less in the same place, because by trial and error or good planning, good management, you sort of end up more or less doing the same thing. Slightly different emphasis, and there are different ways of running those things, there are different ways of going about setting up the shops, there is no question about that. But fundamentally we look at each other, I'm sure we've learnt from each other.

Jean identifies a fundamental similarity between charity shop organisations and seems quite comfortable with this, perhaps indicating a confidence in himself, a personality less concerned with impressing his individualism onto the shops operation. In industries where differentiation is easy to achieve and is meaningful to consumers, the desire of senior management to differentiate their products, shops, services, and brands from each other may be *beneficial*. But because the charity shops sector is characterised by a deep similarity of price and product, this drive might be *detrimental*.

The desire to professionalise, then, is related to the Heads' own personal identities – their desire for their organisations to 'look good' because of the personal association between the Head and the organisation. This points to the importance of studying those at the top of *any* organisation. The phrase 'look good' also implies that the physical presentation of the shops may be important. Whilst the Heads may enjoy showing off their financial performance in the CSS survey and at the Annual Conference, the everyday presentation of their organisation is the shops themselves. In ~ 4 ~ *The Professionalisation of Charity Shops* I noted the argument of Gregson *et al* (2002) that most narratives of professionalisation are about the physical presentation of the shop. While I argued that narratives of the professionalisation of staff and product matters were equally as important, it is nevertheless true that the physical look of the shops has been particularly crucial in recent years. Imperial Cancer Research Fund raised the standards of charity shops significantly in 2001 with a number of £70,000 shopfits (reported at the 2001 Annual Conference). Despite significant doubts over the ability of such expenditure to increase profits rather than just sales (Goodall 2001c), the look of the shops is the most significant contemporary trend. This, I believe, is related partly to the downturn and the desire to simply 'do something' to make a difference to poor performance. Also, however, it is related to the desire of charity shop Heads to be associated with shops that 'look nice', *even if this is counter-productive in business terms*. Identity is partly driving this process.

Heads therefore assume that other people will link them with the shops and the organisation, because of their own identifications. Personal and organisational identities are entangled in a complex web of self-assessment by reference to other, physical entities. Because of this, the Heads are very keen to control the way the shops and the organisation are characterised by others.

6.3.4 Co-operation

There is a strong degree of co-operation in the charity shops sector. Comments like *"We are the most co-operative retail sector in the UK"* and *"I have never known co-operation like this"* were heard at least half a dozen times during the research. Heads sometimes sounded surprised at the high level of co-operation in the sector, formal and informal, even when this co-operation is partly an effect of their own activities.

This sub-section assess the co-operation of charity shop organisations, focusing on the Association of Charity Shops (ACS). The ACS has introduced a number of co-operative initiatives in its short history. It established a 'kitemark scheme' to certify collections of donated goods. It co-ordinates a 'benchmarking survey' which publishes average sales figure of participating charities each quarter (e.g. Goodall 2001a). It organises the annual charity shops conference. It engages in lobbying work for the sector. And it offers a forum for debate and information exchange.

The ACS is not the only example of co-operation in the charity shop sector. The annual Charity Shops Survey publishes the individual results of over 100 charity shop organisations and assesses the state of the sector. The Oxfam Pricing Survey keeps track of changes in pricing. A small group of large charities have begun work on a joint project to establish a Charity Superstore. There is a Midlands Hospice Shops Group. Hospices and charities also help each other informally by sharing information on staffing procedures, the viability of certain towns, tips for dealing with problem volunteers, or theft and vandalism. Some large charities share sales figures on a monthly basis and also facilitate meetings between specialists such as their property and accounts people. Many Heads know each other and will ring a colleague to impart or glean some information or just for a chat. A number of Heads previously worked for other charity shop organisations – ex-colleagues make good contacts. But the ACS is the most important example of sectoral organisation and is our focus here.

At the time of writing (1 January 2002) the ACS has 180 members running around 5,900 shops between them and contributing over £135,000 to the ACS in combined annual membership fees. 180 Heads must identify with the charity shops sector.

Figure 6.1 Flyer for the ACS Kitemark Scheme, distributed in charity shops, 2000-2001

LOOK OUT!

FOR THIS NEW LOGO



making the most
of your donations

Association of
Charity Shops

**Charities using this logo are
making the most of your donations**

Because they

- Run charity shops
- Use your donations to raise as much money as possible for their charities
- Meet their statutory obligations and operate under a code of good practice
- Are registered charities (or their trading companies)

Look for this logo – in charity shops – on house to house collection sacks – on clothing/book banks

design by Coley Porter Bell
Association of Charity Shops Registered Co. No. 3700512 2000


Amongst the Heads who were instrumental in establishing the ACS – those consulted during its review, those on the original Steering Group of the old Charity Shops Group that were midwives at the ACS's birth, those who paid for the strategic review and pump-primed the ACS with cash in its earliest months, and those who were elected to the first ACS board – the organisation feels very much like 'their baby'. They wanted it to exist, they created it, they worked for it, and they now feel close to it. For them it is a triumph of direct co-operation between charity shop Heads, a self-produced little miracle for which they are wholly responsible. In other words, a number of charity shop Heads have a strong identification with the ACS and, by association, with the sector.

Yet there is always a debate about what the sector is and should be. In other words, whilst members are involved in an identification process with the sector, they are not quite sure what they are identifying with: how the sector should be characterised. This characterisation debate can be clearly seen in one of the ACS's most important activities, its 'kitemark scheme'. This is designed to educate and reassure the public about the relative merits of donating their unwanted goods to various types of organisation (see Figure 6.1). Members of the kitemark scheme are entitled to display a sign, the 'kitemark', indicating to a potential donor that their donation will go to a charity shop, not direct to rag, and therefore the most will be made of that donation.

Establishing the scheme required considerable co-operation and involved discussing controversial issues about the use of donated goods by a small number of members. Some charity shop organisations collect donated goods through textile banks but do not put these goods through the shops. Sometimes the bank is owned by a textile recycler and the charity merely lends its name to the recycler, who pays the charity for the use of this name. Sometimes the recycler pays an annual fee to a charity who owns the bank, or pays a specified fee per tonne of clothing collected. These practices are controversial both because it is potentially misleading to members of the public and because it reduces the total national supply of donated stock going to charity shops. The amount of money the charity receives from the textile recycler through any of these processes is far lower (by a factor of around 100) than they could generate if they sold the stock in a shop.

The idea of the kitemark scheme is to let donors know that members of the scheme 'make the most of their donation' by using it in their charity shops. Members of the scheme are expected to abide by a set of regulations: some mandatory and some 'good practice' (see Figure 6.2). The establishment of the scheme therefore entailed defining more carefully who is 'one of us'. A charity shop organisation can be a member of the ACS while not being a member of the Kitemark Scheme, either through choice or because it does not meet the criteria (i.e. it operates these controversial arrangements with textile recyclers). But for members of the scheme, it offers a rarefied (and formalised) *characterisation* of the sector and a way of being *identified* (literally, by the public) as part of an 'authentic' inner circle.

Figure 6.2 Regulations for the ACS Kitemark Scheme



Association of Charity Shops

Company Number 3709512
Company Limited by Guarantee

Regulations for the issue of the ACS Kitemark to be adopted by all users of the ACS Kitemark

1 Mandatory requirements

- 1.1 To be aware of and comply with statutory obligations. (e.g. under health and safety, employment, consumer protection, house to house collections, and general charity law).
- 1.2 To inform and train staff and volunteers in good practice in all charity shop matters.
- 1.3 To treat the public with care and consideration.
- 1.4 To seek donations in kind solely to support your own charity shops in the UK.
- 1.5 To publicise clear contact details of your charity in all requests for donations and ensure that charity personnel and vehicles where possible are clearly identifiable.
- 1.6 To display where possible the ACS Kitemark on all materials seeking such donations and in shops.
- 1.7 To pay the necessary fee.
- 1.8 To inform the ACS Secretariat of any activity of the charity which makes it ineligible to use the Kitemark.
- 1.9 Not to bring the charity shops sector into disrepute by any inappropriate or illegal activity.

2. Good practice guidelines on house to house collections to be issued to all users of the kitemark (Members are asked to observe these good practice guidelines but they are not mandatory.)

- 2.1 Take appropriate measures to avoid house to house collections overlapping in time and place with other collections.
- 2.2 Collect at the times stated.
- 2.3 Push collection sacks fully through letterboxes.
- 2.4 Ensure collection sacks comply with safety standards.
- 2.5 Ensure collections are not undertaken by minors and that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that collectors are fit and proper persons.
- 2.6 Make every effort to collect unused sacks.
- 2.7 Ensure collectors are polite and helpful at all times.
- 2.8 Ensure collectors' identification badges are always clearly visible and print the charity's contact details on the sack to deter bogus collectors.
- 2.9 Close gates to houses approached.

3. Procedures for taking action against misuse of the Kitemark

Breaches of the Mandatory Requirements for use of the mark, which are brought to the attention of the Association will be considered by the Board of Directors. Where misuse is by a person or body, which is not an Authorised User, appropriate legal steps will be taken. Where misuse is by an Authorised User, the case will be considered by the Board of Directors, which may remove from that person or body the right to use the mark.

224 Shoreditch High Street, London E1 6PJ
Tel: 020 7422 8620 Fax: 020 7422 8624
e-mail: mail@charityshops.org.uk website: www.charityshops.org.uk
VAT Reg. No. 731 3311 79

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28/08/01

The ACS is also a competitive body, for the co-operatively produced information it distributes is used by Heads in competitive work. This relates to an apparent contradiction between homogeneity and heterogeneity in the way the ACS works. There is a fear amongst some Heads, such as Jean Bilôme, that the information sharing promoted by the ACS will lead to an increase in imitation and eventually to a homogenous charity shop sector.

I think the future of the sector's success and survival is individuals doing their own thing, and being very competitive, absolutely. I mean I don't think for a minute that this kind of big, homogeneous, blobby effect is going to be good at all. I hope we're not heading in that direction. I don't think we want to be moving toward standard practices, and I'm slightly against getting into things like comparative pricing.

But at the same time most members find comfort in the fact that the sector is a relative homogenous group, partly because this makes for easier characterisation and identification, and partly (and relatedly) because it can be used to exert pressure on organisations that operate too differently, through the Kitemark for example. In addition to the Kitemark, the ACS operates as a forum for the regulation of what counts as 'acceptable charity shop' practice, simply by being a network of social interactions. Nicky Legge wants the homogeneity of the sector to develop so that the 'rogues' can be regulated or excluded:

I think the sector as a communicative sector is as strong as it's ever been. There is a sense of solidarity as a sector which we've never had, and it needed that, to be honest with you. I think it's very pleasing to see the way it's come, and the exchange of information is good. There are still a few rogue charities out there, there always will be. But I think now we've got the ACS, peer pressure will sort that out eventually, and it needs to be strong peer pressure. I think it's going very well actually.

There is a genuine friendship and camaraderie between many of the members, especially those who have been involved for some time. Terry Ingham often refers to other Heads as "pals". Most Heads take a quite pragmatic approach to co-operation. A senior manager at ShopsCom described his organisations' co-operative stance as:

More closed than open but we share what we also want to receive. We'll scratch each others' backs a little. [James]

Scratching the backs of others is easier when the others are people you relate to, trust and identify with. Most of the information sharing between charity shop organisations is based on the fact that all members run 'traditional' charity shops (selling wholly or mainly donated goods). This leads to the important observation that, as well as being a trade association, a lobbying focus, and an information exchange nexus, the ACS is a club, a place for like-minded people. If you are a charity shop Head, the ACS is an organisation that contains people like you. It is the place to go to be reassured that you are not the only charity shop Head on the planet and that you are not the only charity shop Head facing a particular problem. Chris Vaughan is very appreciative of the contact with other Heads he gets from the ACS:

My actual personal contact with other Heads is not very great, to be honest. I suppose the only REAL contact that I get with the sector as a whole, and certainly in terms of discussing issues and looking at things that interest the sector, is through the Association of Charity Shops. I've personally thought this was an important organisation.

Hilary Quinn notes the need for a 'club':

The Charity Shops Group worked from the start, and it will as the ACS, because people do like to share and I think they see the benefits of that sharing.

But some Heads have only joined the ACS recently and they often have a greater degree of scepticism about the Association, a sense that it is a club to which they do not belong. Vivian

Hodgson, for example, who runs Violet Hospice Shops some distance from London, stresses the importance of knowing face-to-face who you are dealing with:

I joined it recently and they sent me a load of bumph. I'll take it home and read it and find that quite useful. I doubt that I will be going to lots of meetings. Having said that I will go to the first one to suss out who's there. I know who the membership organisations are but you can't tell what it's really like from that, can you?

Ashley March was interviewed soon after he first attended an ACS meeting. He was not impressed:

My personal view is that I was personally very disappointed with that meeting. Now I don't know whether that's a personality thing, i.e. I'm the kind of person who's very different to the other people in that room, because of my experience. I come from retailing. Or whether it was ... I don't know. My key thought was, 'why aren't they doing something about getting money into their businesses?' Nobody mentioned minimum wage. That's going to cut a huge slice of the cost in those charities ... That's a critical business thing. Also marketing wasn't discussed, which is very critical. They just talked about putting labels on donations. Well how is that going to really benefit the charity world? So my personal view is that I was disappointed by the meeting, people didn't tackle the issues I thought ought to be tackled, they tackled some issues which I saw as irrelevant. I see collecting information as being important. I've recently received my membership form asking me for £400 to join, that £400 is better spent here in the hospice. So I won't be joining the charity society or whatever they call themselves.

New to the meeting and the group, he failed to appreciate the importance of the issue of kitemarking donated goods and did not know that the previous two meetings had involved detailed discussions of the impact of the national minimum wage. He also clearly had some pent-up issues he wanted to discuss but found he couldn't. His expectations were high and not met. This is partly because the ACS, like many member-led organisations, has a momentum of its own, a course of debate that follows the wishes of its members and its own 'timing', so that, for example, an issue raised by a member in February might be mentioned as Any Other Business at the April meeting, discussed subsequently and given a full agenda item at the September meeting, where agreement is reached to invite a speaker to the January meeting, from which a summary of the issues is produced and distributed to members in the March bulletin. Most important is Ashley's remark that his disappointment was probably because the other Heads were not like him because of his retail background. This was a quite incorrect supposition, for almost all Heads actively involved with the ACS (i.e. attending meetings) are ex-private sector retailers, just like him. However, his sense of being different was a key part of his experience. He *characterised* something about himself that he (incorrectly) presumed would differentiate him from the other Heads at the meeting so that he was able to justify not *identifying* with them. His desire to do this, based on his discomfort, is a function of the club-like atmosphere of the ACS and the personal closeness (in friendship terms) of its longer members, that may sometimes feel exclusionary to new members. Ashley also made a point of not knowing what 'they' call 'themselves'.

In summary the ACS has a significant impact on the relations that Heads have with each other. It is the main conduit of these relations and facilitates a very wide sectoral conversation between, potentially, 180 members. It is an organisation and, under its auspices, the Heads become the personal manifestation of 'the sector'. It is the major context in which Heads meet

other Heads and thus learn to define and refine their own selves, as well as their perspective on what it means to be a charity shop Head. It is a key forum for processes of classification, characterisation and identification. But all Heads have a different relationship to the ACS and thus to the other Heads in the Association, from loyal engagement through distant scepticism to non-membership.

6.3.5 Co-operating Competitors

This section has indicated that the twin attitudes – co-operation and competition – co-exist in the charity shops sector and that these are related to identity processes and professionalisation. Before concluding this discussion, I want to briefly draw the twin discussions of co-operation and competition closer together and suggest that competition and co-operation are intricately linked. Imagine that we could measure the co-operativeness and competitiveness of each charity shop organisation and plot these two variables on a graph (Figure 6.3). Each charity shop organisation could be placed at one point on the graph. To make the analysis easier, bisect each axis into 'low' and 'high', creating four 'ideal-type' areas. This would be very difficult empirically and these four areas do not have an empirical basis. This is an analytical exercise to develop thinking about competition, co-operation, and their relationship.

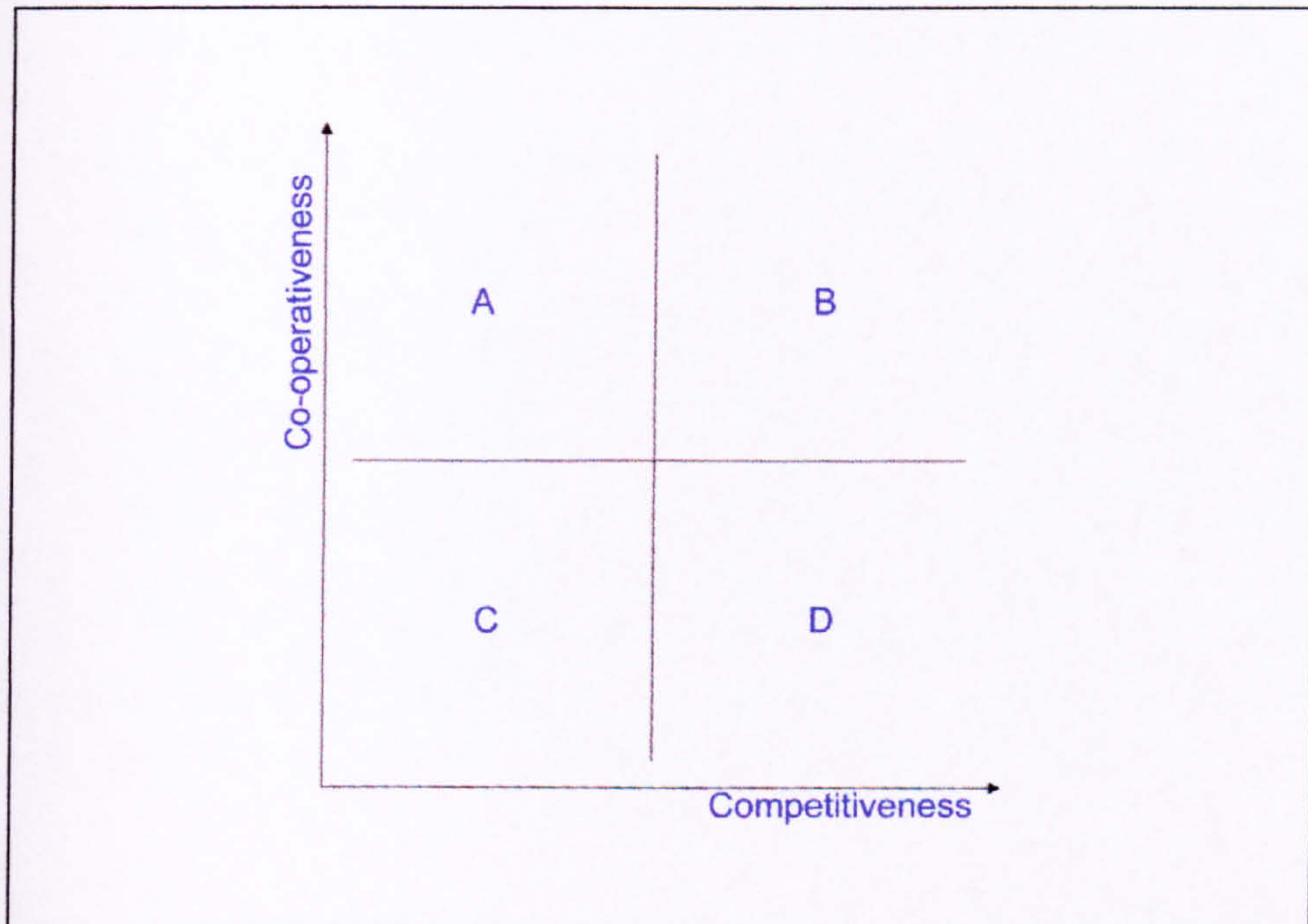
If competitiveness was wholly unrelated to co-operativeness, the dots representing each charity shop organisation could be plotted anywhere on the graph. And, theoretically speaking, this could indeed be the case. *There is no necessary relationship between co-operation and competition.* It is *possible* to be very competitive and not at all co-operative (D), or vice versa (A), or very co-operative and very competitive (B), or neither co-operative nor competitive (C). These are the four ideal types. The four categories represent particular stances and, I suggest, stages of development in the charity shop sector.

A – Naïve. These charity shop organisations are very co-operative but not particularly competitive. There are very few organisations in this category, helping others without regard to their own performance. This could be considered naïve, unprofessional and damaging to their parent charities who need funds. In the past, many hospices may have fallen into this category in their dealings with each other and there are still a number of these. They can help each other without competing because of the common agreement about hospice borders. But as the total charity shop 'cake' has shrunk and as border disputes between hospice shop organisations have increased in number, most hospice shop organisations have become more competitive too, and moved across into category B.

B – Outward-looking. Here, charity shop organisations are both highly competitive and highly co-operative. This is the most common stance amongst ACS members, who have a positive engagement with other charity shop organisations. In order to know how their competitors are

doing, they feel the need to co-operate in the Charity Shops Survey, in the ACS benchmarking survey, at the Annual Charity Shops Conference. As Andy Young said earlier, gaining competitive information can be easier if you are friendly. Most of the quotes in the section fell somewhere within this stance, wanting to help the sector, to help one's colleagues where nothing commercial is at stake, but also wanting to increase your market share at their expense, while falling short of putting them out of business altogether. This stance is associated with a more professional approach to charity shop organising: aware and engaged.

Figure 6.3 Degree of Co-operation against Degree of Competition



C – Insular. These charity shop organisations are neither competitive nor co-operative, the polar opposite of those in B. This stance is still adopted by a number of very small charity and hospice shop organisations. I say 'still' because it is the stance of much of the charity shop sector before the Charity Shops Survey (1992 onwards) and the Charity Shops Group (1993). The Head of a 'C' charity shop organisation is not very interested in or aware of the activities of her competitors, at either shop or management level, and does not think of asking how they are doing or asking for help. This stance is associated with a rather unprofessional approach to charity shop management: unaware and disengaged.

D – Ruthless. These charity shop organisations are very competitive but not co-operative and are therefore sometimes considered the pariah (or 'rogue' to use Nicky Legge's term) charity shops organisations, at least by those in category B. They are as competitive as those in B, if not more so, but without being co-operative. Some of these are free-riding ACS members who receive the data from others but do not submit their own. At the more extreme level, there are organisations like The Salvation Army that have not joined the ACS (surely no crime) and

engage in very competitive collections of donated goods. This group is criticised by category B Heads, which may reflect their envy for not having the confidence to work alone and be as ruthless, or their discomfort at the perceived unfriendliness.

The historical movement has been towards both more competitiveness and more co-operativeness. These two elements are generally perceived as 'professional' and progressive – it is considered competent to manage your external relations and have a positive and constructive engagement with the rest of the sector. It is considered backwards to be neither competitive nor co-operative, insular. It is considered naïve to be co-operative without being competitive. And it is considered rude to be very competitive without being co-operative. These are normative positions, characterisations made by the 'moral majority' in category B.

It seems that *balancing* your competitiveness and co-operativeness is the most desirable attitude. Excess in one without the other is considered unbalanced and ultimately damaging to the charity – either you do not raise enough funds because you are too friendly and not tough enough, or you damage the charity's reputation because you are too tough and not friendly. This reflects a desire for moderation, for normality, for people to be balanced, rounded, accountable, professional and competent. This is exactly why co-operation and competition is about identity, about finding people 'like you' who you can engage with and can assure you that you are not alone. And it is exactly why professionalisation processes are so closely related to identity. Even though professionalisation is a differentiated and perhaps even divergent process, the attitudes to competition and co-operation of most charity shop Heads fall within a similar area where they at least identify the terms of debate with each other.

6.4 Private Sector Organisations

6.4.1 Wider Networks

Heads and their organisations are integrated within a bustling and complex network of people and organisations that extend far beyond the charity shops sector and their parent charities. Relations with this network are important because they generate the everyday positioning of the charity shop organisations and Heads. Charity shops must manage their relations with this wider network and bend it to their will as far as possible, but they must also react to the demands of others and bend themselves when occasion demands. They must try to create relations with others that maintain the integrity of their own persons, organisations, sectors, and values, but they must sometimes also be all things to all people.

This section assesses their relations with various private sector organisations. Watching the Heads in their dealings with private sector businesses is more likely to highlight their narratives of 'charitability' than any other set of relations, increasing our understanding of their processes of identity formation. This section considers only the ShopsCom case study. ShopsCom's examples include the 'stances' adopted by HospiShop and VolShop in their relations with private sector organisations – being 'needy', being ruthless – and other examples besides.

6.4.2 ShopsCom

ShopsCom has wide and complex relations with private sector organisations. This is partly a function of its size and partly a function of its general outlook, which is business oriented. Given this wide variety of relations, ShopsCom is forced to adopt a variety of guises, masks and stances. Whilst we could suggest that these guises are no more than Mead's 'me's, leaving the 'I' at the core of the organisations untouched, I believe we must see them as productive performances that mean something at the time and must influence how those in the organisation perceive the organisation. Because we are mainly talking about the identity of the organisation here, there is no real sense of 'I' at all. All of its organisational selves are masks ascribed to it or adopted by its members. In what follows, then, I present the various guises that I saw being applied to ShopsCom by its staff.

Most of ShopsCom's stock is sourced directly from members of the public but this supply is limited. Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom, was always on the look out for other sources of stock. The notes of a meeting recorded the following examples:

ShopsCom is looking to buy brand new 'return to manufacturer' stock, originally from M&S. It would be bought through an agent.

... ShopsCom has investigated the possibility of buying stuff, especially winter stock, from a textile recycling firm. Why sell so much to them in the first place just to buy it back?

... ShopsCom is thinking of working with a mortgaging bank to get contact details of people moving house, to get stock through house clearances.

In these situations, ShopsCom always presented itself as a reputable organisation with good credit – it will pay for the goods or service and on time. This was necessary because of the perception by some suppliers that, as a charity, ShopsCom was not a real business and maybe not business-like. Part of ShopsCom's identity was to be 'reputable'. Similarly, Robert (property department, ShopsCom) explained that "the charity thing" can get in the way of doing business with private sector landlords:

When looking to take out a lease on a property, the charity thing is a common misconception, he told me. He often has to sell the charity as not like a charity, using photos of current shops. They have to prove professionalism to the landlords. The landlords worry about a 'crappy' look. They have to tell them who else they are tenants of. They have to explain that they spend more than average retailers on their shopfits. But the landlords still make deliberate efforts to keep them out of shopping centres. The high street is considered OK for charity shops now, but not shopping centres.

The perception of the charity shop as 'crappy' has to be overcome by ShopsCom property people and their negotiating skills. They have to present themselves as, literally, business-like and must conform and act like private sector retailers in order to compete with them. Landlords still regulate a strict retail geography for charity shops. As Robert says, he reserves his "best suit for meeting landlords", pointing to the embodiment of identity and the relationship between the organisational and the personal.

Chris Vaughan, Head of ShopsCom, is suspicious of all the potential suppliers of stock. He tells his staff to watch out for suppliers that offer a good first batch of stock then deliberately downgrade the quality of later batches after the agreement is signed. "We need to keep a very beady eye," he warned. Inter-organisational relations are always relations between people, relying on trust, confidence, and mutual understanding. The structures of organisations intervene in these personal relations – for example, Chris is unlikely to ever meet the agent or the textile recycler in the above examples – which magnifies issues of trust and increases the importance of contractual obligation. However, Chris was due to meet someone from the mortgage company. The size and reputation of this company and the scale of the potential project they would be working on means he felt the need to "eyeball them" and let them "see we are serious about this and professional enough to handle it". Personal face-to-face contact is deemed necessary to reinforce trust and, particularly, to allow for the personal performance of

organisational professionalism. Personal identity assertions are used to ascribe characteristics to the organisation by those outside it.

In some situations the charity shop organisation is far larger and more powerful than the private sector operations it deals with. This is certainly the case with ShopsCom's relations with the textile recyclers that collect its unsold or unsaleable waste textiles. These 'ragmen' tend to be fairly small operators.

While I was at one ShopsCom shop, the 'ragmen' arrived. They opened the window of the first floor sorting room and began flinging the black sacks of rag onto the street below, joking about the different points they would get from hitting different types of passer-by. "Ten points for a Paki!" one laughed, presumably not noticing the Pakistani volunteer of South Asian origin making a cup of tea behind him.

These guys seem a million miles away from ShopsCom head office, and don't 'fit' in the atmosphere of the shop either. They are uncouth, unprofessional, childish and, according to the shop manager, always trying to screw the shop by claiming the weight of rag collected is far less than they actually took. She had begun weighing all the sacks herself before they came. She confessed that she generally made up a number based on a rough calculation of the number of bags and then "added some to be safe. They're ruthless", she shrugged, justifying her actions.

The shop manager has adapted to the 'ruthless' style of the rag men in order to counteract their exploitative behaviour. There is also great distrust of ragmen amongst those at ShopsCom head office and a similar ruthless attitude to dealing with them:

Matthew works in the finance department and noted that ShopsCom has recently introduced tough credit control to stop bouncing cheques from rag merchants. They go straight to a threat of legal action if a cheque bounces. In a previous job [in a private sector firm] he gained lots of experience of chasing money. He has to give the ragmen a hard time or they don't hand over the cash.

There was a strong sense at ShopsCom that textile recyclers are unprofessional compared with ShopsCom. Although ostensibly a charity, ShopsCom is far more business-like than these private sector "cowboys" (Chris' term). If ShopsCom has to act ruthlessly to protect itself, it will do so.

The size of ShopsCom also gives it a degree of purchasing clout. It is able to negotiate significant discounts from the printing company that it uses for all printing and paper needs. ShopsCom also does house-to-house collections and sent letters to 23 companies, tendering out the contract for producing its collection sacks. The tender documentation contained a four page technical specification of what was required from the manufacturer. The same clout and

insistence on business-like professionalism and attention to standards was applied to shop-fitting work in its shops:

[Robert, property]

He explained, "We have 7 or 8 people who tender for the shop-fitting work of our shops. Most work solely for us and consist of one or two people. They are not always contract conversant so the contracting can take time."

So ShopsCom is more business-like and conversant with contracts than some of the private sector firms it employs. The style of organising is not necessarily determined by one's sectoral position or the ultimate purpose of your economic activities. ShopsCom's professionalisation process has taken it *beyond* the professionalism of many private sector firms.

Taking a lead from Chris, ShopsCom makes significant use of external private sector consultants. A logistics consultancy firm, for example, was employed to produce a report on the ways warehousing could be used to increase stock levels in certain charity shop units. Knowledge and expertise was perceived to be external to ShopsCom and was bought in. They also use an external company supplying a 'mystery shopping' service, an expert retail consultancy firm. This company employs people to visit and make purchases in ShopsCom shops and report back if staff or volunteers fail to give a receipt (allegedly a strong indicator of theft) or if there is no-one 'on the floor' other than the person behind the till. This company is a hidden tool of surveillance.

The reliance on *retail* consultants represents Chris' view that, first and foremost, running charity shops is a *retailing* business. He sees himself as 'a retailer' and believes he has more in common with private sector retailers than with other charity fund-raisers. However, in relations with two other consultants, this stance shifted. Both of these centred on staffing matters, one an example of relations with a private sector recruitment consultancy (pseudonym G-Staff) and one with a major private sector retailer (pseudonym Canex).

Marie, a representative of G-Staff, came to ShopsCom's office to meet with Chris, Mike (a senior ShopsCom manager), and Helen (from ShopsCom's personnel department). Marie proceeded to explain the recruitment tools that her company could offer, mainly psychometric tests to screen applicants for shop manager and shop assistant jobs.

Chris interrupted: "I have to explain the special situation of charity retailing. You see, we are very different from a commercial retailer. Our managers have different motivations and their job roles are in fact much more demanding than managing a normal retail store. And they get paid less. So we have a big issue with retention. And our shop assistants are mainly volunteers, but we pay some. They are not always the most socially balanced people in the world, for some reason."

Marie tried to explain that her product was applicable to any retailer interested in recruitment and would certainly help retain staff, but

Chris was sceptical and seemed to feel the product was not appropriate to the "special situation of charity retailing".

This differentiating between charity and private sector retail was more than an unemotional signalling of practical differences. Chris' tone contained a sense of pride that charity shops are different, a feeling that charity retailing requires a set of specialist skills that ordinary retailers do not have and do not understand. Charity shop management is "special" and therefore private sector retail experts must have the special nature of charity shops explained to them. Here, charity shop professionalisation and his own identity both depend on the special skills of *charity* retail. This is a significant slippage from his usual argument that charity shop organising is all about *retail*. This highlights the value of studying a *variety* of types of relations – by shifting context to another 'other', we see Chris adopting a quite different stance. His identity assertions are therefore *strategic*, rather than fundamental.

In the G-Staff example above, Chris's construction of charity shop expertise is used to devalue the expertise of non-charity retailing. However, in his relations with Canex, Chris seemed to lose this scepticism completely. He appeared to have a great deal of trust in the advice of this major private sector retailer. Canex had a direct link to ShopsCom through its Board. This non-executive Board consists of some private sector retailers and some senior people from ShopsCom's charity. The Board offers Chris advice and direction and can make the final decision on crucial issues. The chair of the Board, Martin, is a Director of Canex. According to Chris, he is "very, very useful; delightful." He is a VIP in the retailing world and Chris is very pleased he is on the Board.

Martin has used his influence to persuade various members of Canex's staff to offer free advice to Chris and his team at ShopsCom, especially on staffing matters. The Personnel Manager and the Retail Training Manager of Canex had both visited ShopsCom and offered advice which Chris seemed keen to take:

Chris said: "I like the idea of a standard ShopsCom interview format. Canex claim every interview has set questions so they are comparable and you ensure you are not missing everything."

This is the second time recently he has said 'Canex do something and so should we'. The other was shop managers doing a shop floor walk twice a day. He seems to want to model ShopsCom on Canex. But why does he not have these ideas himself? They seem obvious. Are they not pretty basic retail management techniques?

It is also interesting that Canex is a very standard British retailer in the old mould – hierarchical, standardised, centralised, and exploitative. I have since spoken with four Canex staff at shop level: two shop managers and two shop assistants. Without prompting they were all critical of

their company's employment practices and the culture of mild fear and strong centralised control that operates on the shop floor and through the management structures. None of them had been with the company more than 12 months and there is a very high rate of staff turnover. Nevertheless, Chris seemed slightly enthralled by Canex.

Canex's consultancy work with ShopsCom did not incur a fee. It was part of Canex's 'charitable' role, a way for it to 'give something back to the community'. Chris has to appear both professional *and* needy to keep Martin comfortable in his role. He has to be professional so that Martin's efforts (chairing meetings of the ShopsCom Board and pulling strings to get Canex staff released to help ShopsCom) are translated into material benefit, and to ensure Martin and Canex are associated with a well-known, professional charity organisation, as they desire. He has to be needy so that Martin feels there is a role for him and feels that he has valuable expertise to offer (or summon up from within Canex).

Stressing one's 'charitability' is a favourite wheeze for many charity organisations. The Association of Charity Shops had its kitemark logo designed for free by a professional agency, even though the ACS itself is not a charity. There was another good example from ShopsCom:

I'm in the property area. Robert asks Simon a question about VAT on the water rates. He suggests: "I can always fudge it by saying we're a charity so we don't keep records?" This is appearing less professional than you are to help you!

So one of the most professional charity shop organisations is quite happy to adopt the charity persona if it suits. Organisational identities, then, are strategic and shifting. Unlike personal identities, there is less need for them to be coherent and unitary. There is a weaker sense of the 'will to fixity'.

6.5 Selves and Others

Some narratives of charity shop professionalisation include the perception that parent charities have different organising cultures and different priorities from the shops, leading Heads to want to distance the shops from the charity. To fully assert their identities of business-like professionalism, many Heads feel the need to be free of the interference, democracy, slowness and political correctness of the people in their parent charities. This distance both requires and contributes to the sense that the 'charity people' lack the retailing skills and expertise that the Heads *can* offer. Some Heads, however, take different stances towards professionalisation, based on weaker senses of this need for separation. This organisational and cultural closeness to the parent charity represents a less 'retail' and more 'charity' focused shops organisation. There is therefore a strong process of co-relation and mutual development between personal and organisational identity, organisational relations, and organising cultures.

Classifying economic and industrial sectors is a task often undertaken by economists and government agencies, but it is also performed less consciously by people in all walks of organisational life. Classifying a sector is not the same as identifying with it. This identification process involves associating oneself with organisations like your own. The charity shops sector has developed as a unique and distinct sector through these processes of classification and identification. In addition, processes of characterisation – deciding 'what *type* of sector are we?' – have been crucial in shaping the professionalisation debate. Competition and co-operation *can* both occur only using classification processes. For example, a charity shop Head can note that his shops compete with discount retailers without identifying himself as *like* these discounters. Sectoral co-operation and competition occur in the most concentrated form with people from your own sector, with those you do identify with. The success of the ACS and its Kitemark Scheme represent the development of sectoral relations and processes of both characterisation and identification. Increasing membership signals more people identifying that this is 'their' sector. Additionally, more attempts to define certain practices as acceptable (and discipline transgressions) involve people characterising what *type* of sector it is.

ShopsCom's complex and diverse relations with private sector organisations demonstrate that people in charity shop organisations gain some sense of self-definition, however fluid, in their relations with other organisations. The professionalisation process in ShopsCom has given its members a sense of greater professionalism than some of their private sector partners, but when free advice from a major private sector retailer is available, the Head of shops is quick to roll over and play needy. 'Charity' can be as useful an identification as 'retailing' and 'professionalism'. The identities of organisations require less cogency and can be more fluid and strategic than those of people.

All these relations show the importance of identity processes in organisational practices.

Asserting Professionalism

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Chapter Summary

The two previous chapters searched for the 'self' in stories about the Heads' career-identity shift and in relationships with other types of organisation. This chapter examines the 'self' within the workplace practices of charity shop Heads; by focusing on perhaps the most important but nebulous identity of charity shop Heads – their professionalism. The three Heads examined here offer significantly different understandings and assertions of professional identities. This discussion of professionalism clearly indicates the intricate relationship between Heads' identities and the charity shop professionalisation process; between personal identity and material 'economic' outcomes. The Heads' ideal models of professionalism are contrasted with the assertions of professional identities in practice.

7.1.2 Identity

This chapter analyses practices of identity assertion. *Assertion* avoids the sense that identities are fixed pre-existing characteristics simply waiting to be expressed. Only by asserting an aspect of identity – whether explicitly or implicitly, whether to others or only yourself – can it be created, altered, reinforced or denied. These asserted identities highlight the relationship between levels three and five on the scale of self-hood discussed earlier because there are degrees of assertiveness. Level three is a less reflexive version of distinctiveness – you *just know* you are distinctive because of a particular characteristic. This distinctiveness is asserted relatively unconsciously. Level five is more reflexive – you consciously *want* to be characterised in a particular way. The Heads in this chapter offer different examples of these various identity processes and demonstrate the inherently contradictory nature of personal identity, particularly the way it is 'made-up' and used strategically in practice.

7.1.3 Professionalisation

Discourses of professionalism are a powerful resource in the construction of accountable everyday identity and practice. 'Being professional' is one of the most common and profoundly important identity assertions of charity shop Heads. It is often assumed to be 'good' in that most people *want* to be seen as professional. Professionalism is also generally assumed to be universally understood – most people fail to question its meaning and they assume there is a simple, single meaning used in the same way by everyone. However, a variety of significantly different understandings of professionalism co-exist in the charity shop context, reflecting and constituting different sectoral positions and different understandings of charity shop organising. The participant-observation case studies represent three different professional identities and these differences stress that there are alternatives to the dominant version of professionalisation.

7.1.4 Data

At the centre of this chapter are data relating to one meeting from each participant-observation case study. These meetings involve the charity shop Heads interacting with those employees they directly manage, offering a degree of data comparability. These meetings offer us access to the practical assertion of professional identities rather than simply interview talk about professionalism. Other data from the case studies and interviews are contrasted with the participant-observation data.

7.1.5 Chapter Structure

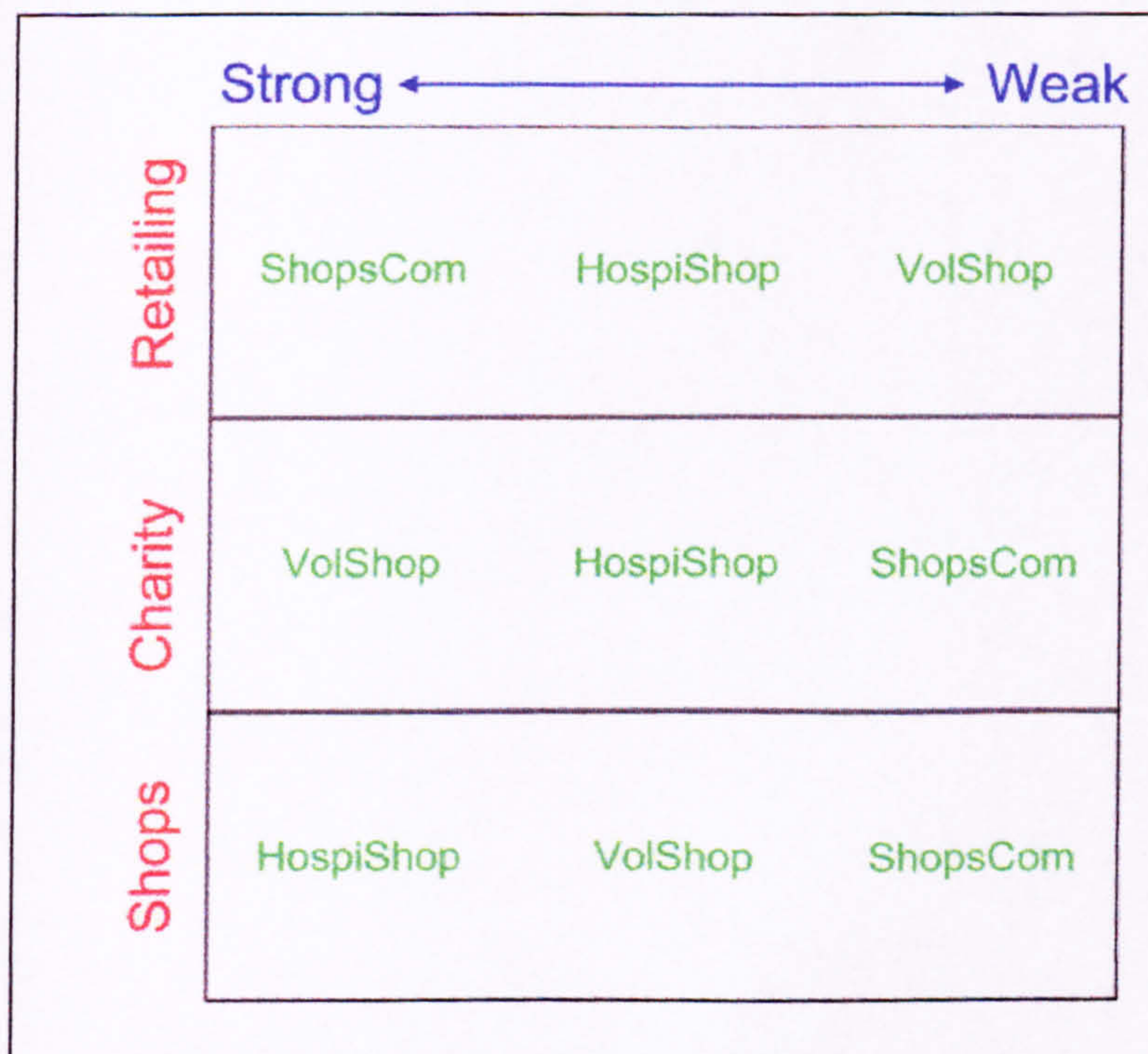
The first section summarises the differences between the three models (7.2) and the subsequent sections examine each case study in turn, ShopsCom (7.3), HospiShop (7.4) and VolShop (7.5). Finally the implications of the analysis are discussed (7.6).

7.2 Three Models

There is no agreed understanding of 'professionalism' amongst charity shop Heads. Most Heads agree on some aspects, such as the notion that professionalism involves being well-organised. But on some crucial aspects of professionalism there are differences of opinion. Partly because charity shops are a relatively recent phenomenon and partly because of their inherent cultural contradictions, the charity shop 'profession' is still open to question. Three distinct versions of charity shop professionalism emerged from the fieldwork, representing three distinct professional identities, each represented by one case study.

Figure 7.1 plots the case studies schematically, according to three *potential characterisations* of charity shop professionalism: a retailing-focused professionalism, a charity-focused professionalism, and a shop-focused professionalism. The Head of ShopsCom strongly associates charity shop professionalism with 'Retailing' and believes charity shop professionals should be characterised as retailers. The Head of HospiShop strongly associates charity shop professionalism with closeness to the shops. The Head of VolShop strongly associates charity shop professionalism with certain notions of charitability. However, each of the three cases cannot be simply associated with each of these characterisations of professionalism, because reality is necessarily more complex than that. Figure 7.1 shows how strongly the cases identify with the characteristics.

Figure 7.1 The Heads' Identifications with Characterisations of Charity Shop Professionalism



The next three sections, first of all, examine in more detail how each Head characterises charity shop professionalism, and, by implication, themselves. This uses data from the semi-structured interviews and from informal talk during participant-observation when the Heads expressed opinions directly to me. They relate to Figure 7.1, which represents the Heads' explicitly stated identifications of charity shop professionalism – their own ideal models, if you like.

Next, each section uses data from periods during the participant-observation when the Heads were asserting their identities *in practice*. It is one thing to tell a researcher your view of charity shop professionalism. It is quite another to assert that professionalism in practice. One of the great benefits of the participant-observation method is the ability to generate this type of evidence. This is not to argue that the interviews are not examples of the practical assertion of identity, for they manifestly are and may, indeed, be important moments in the self-definition of the interviewees. But observing the Heads while they interact with their colleagues allows for an examination of less conscious and less reflexive identity assertions in an interactional setting that is closer to the Head's everyday, researcher-free life. At these times the researcher is able to be more 'observer' and less 'participant'.

The sections that follow therefore contrast the Heads' ideal models of professional charity shop identity with data generated when Heads met with their direct subordinates. I do not assume that these practices undermine their ideal models. And if they did, I would not view this as hypocritical. The role of this section is not to 'catch out' the Heads failing to practice what they preach. Rather it offers insight into the way that identifications with certain versions of charity shop professionalism are constituted in and constitutive of the practice of charity shop organising.

7.3 ShopsCom

7.3.1 Identity Statements

In ShopsCom, charity shop professionalism involves the wholehearted acceptance of a retailing identity, as indicated in Figure 7.1 above. This involves soundly rejecting perceptions that retailing is 'just trade', dirty, not a real profession (a number of Heads feel that such perceptions exist) by stressing the expert nature of retailing. Chris Vaughan sees himself as a skilful, expert "retail professional". Like many other ex-private sector retail professionals, he wishes to maintain the identity he developed in the private sector, despite his shift to charity shops. He therefore downplays suggestions that 'charity retail' requires less retail skills than the private sector. Indeed, he often expresses the view that charity retail requires a *greater* degree of retail professionalism than private sector retail. He also talks of "charity retailing" instead of charity shop management or organising, for *retailing* is perceived to be the profession of organising shops. Charity shop retailing is seen as one type of retailing, alongside fashion, food, and furniture retailing.

The second potential characteristic of charity shop professionalism is its charitability. As Figure 7.1 shows, Chris Vaughan only weakly identifies with this. He shares the common societal assumption that charities are somehow soft, impotent and amateurish. In this, he mirrors other Heads such as Jean Bilôme who found his charity slow, ineffective and unaccustomed to business disciplines; Sasha Grant who found his charity bureaucratic and stuck on social care principles; and Nicky Legge who found his charity excessively politically correct. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Chris has successfully dissociated himself and his shops operation from the parent charity through the creation of significant organisation and physical distance. He is concerned that association with 'charity' can damage a professional retailer's career and feels that a totally separate shops operation allows for the maximum amount of retailing and the minimum amount of 'charity'.

The third potential characteristic of charity shop professionalism to emerge from the data is a focus on shop level practices. Chris also identifies weakly with this version of professionalism. To him professionalism involves thinking strategically about the whole organisation as a business and *not* getting involved in the shops. He has created a many-layered hierarchical structure which organisationally distances him from them, as argued above (5.5). The 'difficult' volunteers and 'dirty' donated second-hand goods contribute most to his feelings of discomfort, despite being the two elements most able to maximise charity shop profits. In Chris' case, this distancing from the shops is thus driven more by issues of personal identity than by the 'rationally' defined needs of the business.

Being distant from the parent charity and the shops, his working environment is focused on retailing and organisational structuring and control in a charity retail head office. Note, however,

that he is close to the shops in terms of data. He has at his fingertips masses of information about the shops: the history of every shop, its sales broken down by category, its staff costs and donated goods collection costs, and its financial performance against the previous year, budget, and target. His view of professionalism involves *this* type of closeness, but it does not involve physical closeness to the shops (he very rarely visits shops and usually only for openings).

7.3.2 Identity Assertions

The ShopsCom meeting analysed here is one of the most important meetings in ShopsCom, when the retail professionals at the head of the organisation, Chris and Mike, meet the other retail professionals, the Regional Managers, to discuss the retailing aspects of the charity shop operation – the aspects taken most seriously in ShopsCom. This is exactly the type of meeting that makes Karen (a Marketing Manager) and Marcus (in the Property Department) feel totally left out of the organisation's decision-making – both had earlier stressed to me that ShopsCom is dominated by the 'retail professionals' leaving little room for the expertise that marketing and property professionals can offer to business decision-making. Keith, the accountant, is the only non-retailer involved, highlighting the importance of financial data to Chris. This meeting is held every other month, covering a wide variety of issues.

It is attended by Chris the Head of Shops, Mike the assistant head of shops, Sarah the Field Manager, Keith the Accountant, and around half a dozen Regional Managers. It is held in a small room with a square table in its centre. The chairs are rather crammed around the table and close to the walls. Chris sits on one corner of the table with Mike on one side of him and Keith on the other. The rest are distributed round the table fairly randomly. All the men – Chris, Mike, Keith and three of the Regional Managers – are in dark suits. Sarah and two female Regional Managers are in smart trousers and jackets. The other Regional Manager is in a skirt and blouse, as is a younger female secretary who sits at a desk nearby making drinks for the meeting attendees, taking phone calls, typing documents and entering figures into spreadsheets.

Chris and Mike appear very relaxed, as though they are 'at home' in this context. Some of the Regional Managers (RMs) seem a little nervous. For a couple of RMs this is their first such meeting. The meeting starts very openly and in a welcoming way:

[Regional Meeting 1]

Introducing the meeting, Chris says: "OK. Let's get going. The only rule is: Say what you really think. You know, I know nothing. And Mike..."

Mike: "... knows even less..." {smiling}

Chris: "... and Sarah's forgetting it..."

Mike: "... and John thinks he knows it all!"

Most people laughed at Mike and Chris' impromptu double act of one-liners. The RMs are being encouraged to be honest, and Mike and Chris are trying to level the hierarchy, by referring to what they don't know. Mike, Chris and Sarah are portrayed as humble by what they do not

know, but John, one of the RMs, is portrayed as the opposite, a know-it-all. John smiled but looked annoyed at the comment.

It was a jokey start, to try to get people to relax. Chris continued: "Welcome to the new people here, and welcome back to those of you who have been on holiday."

So this is a gentle, welcoming, fun start to the meeting, and Chris deliberately sets up the tone he wants - openness and honesty in dialogue. He uses his influence and authority to try to create a group culture that he wants: open not closed, honest not deceitful.

This segment contains a number of identity assertions (all interaction can be interpreted as involving some form of identity assertion), but I focus on just one of Chris' assertions that relates closely to his professional identity as a charity shop Head. Chris decides that his role as Head of Shops necessitates introducing and welcoming people. He tries to help his RMs relax because he wants them to be open rather than scared of him, or worried about appearing incompetent by saying the wrong thing. Despite this, the meeting was full of nervous RMs speaking nervously and saying as little as possible. For all but one of them (John), appearing professional and competent involved keeping as quiet as possible to minimise the chance of saying something that would open them up to criticism. For the new ones, this was likely to have been an initial strategy based on nervousness of meeting Chris and wanting to make a good first impression by *not* making a bad first impression. For the longer-serving RMs, however, this reticence must have been learnt, presumably from previous meetings with Chris or Mike. There was a sense of fear, whatever Chris' reassuring welcome.

This interpretation was powerfully triangulated by Charlotte, one of the RMs I spoke with three weeks after this meeting. For her, professionalism entails "discipline, objectivity and running a team, without fear," and she stressed, "that is how I work". But, she complained, the "same cannot be said for those who manage ME". She feels overworked, underpaid and under-appreciated and finds that the most senior managers are "subjective, patronising and unprofessional." When I asked what she meant by subjective and objective, she said "the difference between treating everyone the same and favouritism." This underlines the importance of personal identities in intra-organisational competition.

The difference between Chris' apparent openness at the start of the meeting and this sense of fear from the RMs, is pertinent to differences between a traditional 'retailing' style of organising and a more 'charitable' style of organising. As we will see with VolShop, the notion of 'charitability' as a key component of charity shop professionalism relates strongly to open, democratic, team-based styles of staff management. Traditional retailing is renowned for its hierarchical, top-down, fear-based management, as many Heads indicated when discussing their career shifts. In the segment above, Chris seems to be asserting a less hierarchical, more open professional identity which might run counter to this traditional retailing version of

professionalism. Perhaps his own version of charity retail professionalism involves moving away from the traditional style of retail management.

Garfinkel's earliest studies of accountability (1967) proceeded by tearing the social fabric in order to reveal the hidden ethnomethods that weave human interaction. By upsetting the unspoken rules of interaction – for example, by consistently interrupting someone every five seconds or by telling your sex life to a stranger in a shop – these rules or ethnomethods became visible. But of course the social fabric is not woven through smooth, easily ordered, interactional practice. Mini-transgressions or, rather, stumbling sequential steps towards mutual understanding (Goffman 1974) are inherent in interaction. In the ShopsCom meeting, it was when *incompetency* and *unprofessionalism* were discussed or displayed that the assertion of professional identities was most clearly revealed. Criticising the lack of competency and professionalism in the actions of others implicitly asserts one's own identity as a professional. The following segments therefore use these moments to examine Chris' assertions of professionalism.

[Regional Meeting 2]

Mike tries to introduce the issue of Clothes Show Live and starts telling the RMs what ShopsCom will be doing there. Chris interrupts him and steers the course of the discussion: "I'd like to know what the view of the meeting is on this."

Mike tried to save face using honesty: "You spotted that one, Chris. Let me start again. Any views?" This also let him get his word in, re-asking the question Chris had already asked.

Mike has clearly behaved unprofessionally, trying to present a *fait accompli* instead of asking for the views of the assembled RMs. Chris considers this bad management of the item. Mike's face-saving remark combined with the first segment indicate that Chris and Mike have previously discussed the meeting style and between them agreed to try to be more open and democratic, especially given the new RMs. This relates to level five in terms of selfhood: very reflexively trying to be something. This interpretation received support from subsequent events, for as the meeting developed, Chris and Mike seemed to revert to 'telling' rather than 'asking'. Chris therefore wishes to engender a more consultative attitude to management in ShopsCom. He manages to police this early transgression by Mike because it is uppermost in his mind as the meeting begins. But as the meeting progresses his mind becomes filled with other issues, so the assertion of this new 'professional' management identity disappears. What is 'organisationally good' (professional identity) is shifting as the meeting continues. The next segment is a good example of this:

[Regional Meeting 3]

Sarah tried to speak - Chris stopped her just by holding up a finger at the correct angle and turning his head a few degrees towards her then back to the speaker. How Chris' authority is embodied! This is a pretty potent display of his professionalism at chairing meetings and being Head. Sarah's attempted interruption may not have been noticed as an

interruption and might have opened up a new avenue of conversation, but it suddenly appears rather incompetent.

This is Chris asserting his professional identity and his authority, for the two are closely related. He must assert his authority in order to be Head of Shops. Chris embarrasses Sarah by drawing attention to the fact that her attempt to speak was an interruption, despite the fact that much of the meeting talk was interruption and counter-interruption, quite happily, seemingly without problem (Sacks *et al* 1974). So Chris' behaviour is now reasserting the more traditional retailing aspect of his professional identity. Soon most people in the meeting adopt this top-down style, in criticism of the Area Managers (AMs), who are directly line-managed by the Regional Managers.

[Regional Meeting 4]

They all discuss the introduction of a new incentive scheme where bonuses will be given for sales. Chris sarcastically suggests, to avoid paying any bonuses out, that they "trial it where it might not work: an indifferent Area Manager with a stock problem!"

There is a laugh at this and a few names of clearly notorious AMs are mentioned, only half jokingly. Mike exclaims very sarcastically: "I don't think we have ANY indifferent Area Managers!?" and Chris continues the joke, deadpan: "I'll talk to you afterwards" as if he will tell Mike about the 'indifferent' Area Managers he ought to know about. The joke is that they all know about indifferent AMs all too well.

Being concerned at the lack of professionalism amongst some Area Managers is an assertion by those at the meeting of their own professional identities. Distrust of your sub-ordinates' abilities is a classic element of the retailing version of professionalism that Chris espouses in interview and now asserts in practice, despite his attempts to be more of a democratic team-builder than an autocratic boss. The Regional Managers who took part in this jokey critique of Area Managers are asserting the very version of professionalism that is also applied against them. Perhaps they sensed this, for in the next segment, that also focuses on the problems of AMs, the RMs work harder to defend their AMs. The discussion is about the 'Label' which is an annual badge, sold in the shops, linked to the charity – like the pink ribbon for breast cancer. The shops make very high profits on these, for they cost little to produce and ask for a £1 'donation'. Customers know that buying the 'Label' is a sign of support for the charity and a way of donating money, rather than a purchase transaction.

[Regional Meeting 5]

The Label "is easy extra business," says Chris, "and I find it amazing that some Area Managers (AMs) won't take part." Bob [RM] tries to explain: "Some are more commercially minded but the majority aren't like that."

Chris: "But I can't understand it at Area Manager level?"

Pauline [RM] points out that one area manager did very badly, despite putting in a lot of effort. Peter [RM] asks: "What about the quality of the

Label? There were some negative comments." He tries to turn the discussion into a questioning of the product rather than the staff. Here three RMs are defending their AMs from the implied charge of laziness or unprofessionalism.

This is partly a battle over the construction of the Area Managers' identities, with Chris focusing on the normative aspects – what AMs should be like – and the RMs noting the practical aspects – what AM are actually like. The Regional Managers deal day-to-day with the Area Managers and presumably have some form of personal attachment to their team. So while in the previous segment they could jokingly laugh at the idea of a few 'indifferent AMs' out there, here they are facing a general critique of all AMs, which they take as a criticism of their own professionalism, their own identities. Of particular interest is Bob's assertion that most AMs are not "commercially minded" which implies that they are *not* unprofessional, merely not commercial. This discussion of AM professional identities is therefore also a debate about the very nature of charity shop organising.

Two weeks after this meeting I recorded the following conversation with Karen, a marketing manager:

Karen complains that meetings she attends, and those she doesn't, "cover marketing even when they're not intended or planned to! They discuss things that are within my remit and even make decisions about it, and may or may not ask me, or I might not even be there but they still decide! Quite often they completely undermine something I've been working on for weeks. They think they're professional, but to tell you the truth, it's badly run. There. I've said it."

She had been building up to saying this for some time and as soon as she said it she looked relieved.

A week before I had recorded the following:

Rebecca, the shop manager at [shop location] sees herself as the competent one, and she questions the competency of head office staff. She says of them: "they have NO idea what they are doing; no idea what it's like to even BE in a charity shop for more than five minutes, let alone RUN one day in, day out."

What the head office staff call professionalisation, Rebecca called centralisation: the wresting of initiative and local control from her to some distant over-paid hierarchy that has no competency in running a charity shop.

These two segments encapsulate the sense that from some perspectives the senior managers are *unprofessional*. Understandings and performances of professionalism differ *within* ShopsCom and even within the same person from one moment to another. Discourses of

'professionalism' are a resource that can be used to judge, categorise, define and plan organisational activity and identity. Being professional is an extremely fluid identity that shifts between people and situations in the same organisation and draws upon ever-changing senses of what organisational actions and styles are 'right' and 'wrong'. This is not to say there is no fixity in these identities and in professionalism, but it is to argue that 'professionalism' is a fluid term and its vagueness is a major source of its strength.

In this meeting, Chris asserted his professional identity in accordance with his stated views about charity shop organising. Though he consciously attempted to amend his management style early in the meeting, as it continued he reverted to a top-down, authority-based style which closely reflects traditional private sector retailing, with which he most closely identified in interview.

7.4 HospiShop

7.4.1 Identity Statements

When I asked Susan Parker, Head of HospiShop, if I could attend a meeting with her shop managers, she stressed:

"I don't HAVE structured meetings!" Her days are very flexible and unstructured. I mentioned that at ShopsCom there was a property meeting, a finance meeting, an operations meeting, a personnel meeting, and a marketing meeting. She laughed at this. She feels the AMs, RMs and HQ staff at the big chains made work for themselves to justify their roles and to keep busy. She also believes they suppress ideas from the shops because ideas are only to come from them, to justify their own importance. She argued that this is pretty unprofessional and often a sign of their insecurity.

The most professional behaviours at ShopsCom – especially high levels of central organisation and the assertion of Head's expertise-based professional identity – are viewed by Susan as unprofessional, underlining the point that professionalism can be applied to quite contradictory behaviours. The ShopsCom version of professionalism is the most common amongst charity shop Heads. But Susan offers an alternative discourse, and Eve of VolShop will offer another. Susan resists charity shop professionalisation beyond a certain point:

I don't like this over-professionalisation that's going on, and this corporate image, and spend twenty thousand pounds on shop fitting. I mean, that is not what we are here for. I don't like the way they spend their money on promotion. I don't like the fact that I'm making 70p in the pound and they're making 30p in the pound. And I don't like the fact that the public don't know that.

Her appeal to 'the public' represents the fact that she is much closer to the shops and therefore shares public resentment or distrust of 'big business' charity. However, Susan implicitly describes her impact on her own shops as 'professionalisation':

They'd been done on an ad hoc basis. They'd been set up by one of the support groups. They thought, years ago, it was a good idea to raise money for the hospice and they were just doing temporary buildings, all very sort of just one step on from your church jumble sale. And they're brilliant! I mean they raised loads of money. I'm not putting it down at all, BUT it got to the stage where ... it had got too much for the couple who were basically running the show, 'cos they were running their own shop and the other shops. And it just needed to be set up more .. sort of .. professionally than that.

Her pauses and "sort of" at the end of this segment indicate the way that 'professional' operates as a useful 'catch-all' term to cover diverse and nebulous organisational characteristics. She almost wants to say the shops needed to be better run and better organised – 'professional' is the term she used instead. Note however her emphasis on not criticising how the shops were run before she arrives, a very different approach to Chris' distaste of the "scruffy" shops he found when he joined ShopsCom.

If we follow HospiShop through Figure 7.1 we see that on two aspects – ‘Retailing’ and ‘Charity’ – it comes somewhere between the two extremes. Susan Parker, as a charity retail professional, identifies closely with neither retailing nor charity, though she is comfortable with both these identifications and combines them in a fairly balanced way. There is less extremism in her position. Her shops are run in a business-like way but with little interference from her. There is room for ‘charitability’ within the shops – through extra care for bereaved volunteers and somewhat relaxed attitudes to staff and volunteers having the ‘first refusal’ on goods that enter the shops – yet there is a marked distance between the shops operation and the parent charity in terms of organising styles or cultures, as noted above (6.2.2). In essence, there is no sense of ideological *striving* towards a ‘retail’ identity or a ‘charity’ identity. Being a charity retail professional is seen as a practical rather than a normative achievement. There is less of the ‘level five’ type identity assertion and less sense, indeed, that she is distinctive compared with her shop managers. Chris would feel he has little in common with his shop managers, and they would think likewise, but this is not the case at HospiShop.

As Figure 7.1 indicates, Susan stressed that professionalism involves being close to the shop staff and volunteers themselves, reflecting the notion that she is similar to them. This is also partly a function of the very small size of her shops operation. Susan is close to the individual shops in a way that Chris of ShopsCom can never be. But more than this, Susan gives the impression of *wanting* to be close to the shops in a way that Chris of ShopsCom never would. Susan rejects the view that charity shops are dirty or amateur, or at least accepts this view but refuses to see it as a critique of her shops or, crucially, her self. Susan finds sorting donated goods “brilliant” and “addictive”. Chris would not work in a shop for a £100,000 annual salary, he admitted to Mike during the meeting analysed above.

Susan’s view of charity retail professionalism is focused on knowing the people in your shops and working closely with them. This knowledge is very personal, growing from her personal presence in the shops and her personal relations with customers, volunteers and her paid managers. Her general ‘bottom-up’ attitude was expressed very clearly in interview:

I think the way I manage is very much sort of ‘bottom-up management’ {in a silly voice} to use the current jargon. I like bottom-up management. I don’t like and don’t do top-down management. I don’t feel I do anyway. And it keeps the managers happy, and they’re the ones who are sorting through the bags day in and day out, and they are not going to do it if they are not happy. And if they’re not happy they’re not going to take care over it. And they really care what is in the till at the end of the day. And I think that that’s just the way that they’re managed. Because if you work in Woolworth’s you don’t care what’s in the till at the end of the day. And if you’re TREATED like you work in Woolworth’s ... They’re not allowed to use their initiative. All this stuff their management says, you know, ‘We listen to our staff and we want ideas through from our staff’ is RUBBISH! It’s complete RUBBISH! It’s ALL jargon. It’s people who just don’t have enough to do with their time looking for the current management trend. And there’re so many trends out there, you pick your guru and you run with him. And, I’m sorry {totally unapologetically}! You’re dealing with PEOPLE. I think they’re all losing that ... But I sit there, I go to lectures on this management course, and I just sit there laughing. And they say, “Why are you laughing?” and I say “Because I run probably one of the most successful charity shop outfits going and I don’t do any of this stuff. Because I just remember that my staff have got BRAINS, you know. They actually HAVE GOT brains. And if they’re encouraged to put them into gear you’ll get an awful lot more out of them.”

This is an important statement about the presumed location of expertise. For Chris at ShopsCom, the 'professionals' are those at head office, those with the expertise to run a large retailing operation. As noted above, this was rejected by Rebecca, the shop manager, who held the opposite view about the location of expertise. Susan would adjudicate on the side of Rebecca, not Chris, and this constitutes her professional identity. Although HospiShop is very small, this approach is not limited to very small charity shop organisations. The Heads of charity shop organisations of other sizes expressed views similar to Susan and felt themselves to be 'in touch' with their shops. Very often this means knowing not just the shop staff and volunteers, but also the customers and the stock. The focus of their work is the material creation of the shops. For Vivian Hodgson of Violet Hospice Shops, this is literally about material:

I can feel the clothes; if the cloth is not good. I can feel a garment just at a glance. But that's what they call flair, which is something all the education in the world will not give you.

Her closeness to the shops is represented by her physical closeness to the clothes, related powerfully to her expert knowledge and her professional identity. Nicky Legge of Purple Shops also refers to a sensual closeness to the shops, focusing on the importance of having 'a good eye.' He links this with the requirements of a charity shop professional:

You can teach some people how to retail, some you can't. Retailing to me is about having a good eye for things and some people naturally have that ... An eye for style, an eye for balance, display, how things look. Some people don't have that eye, others naturally have it ... I've seen people who've never had an ounce of window display training but who can do a superb window. They just know how to do it ... But most people aren't like that, most people need training and support, they're the people you have to spend time on ... I would say if you looked at most of the charity retail directors they probably have all got that eye. If they haven't, then they're vulnerable at a very base, shop level. They can be great strategists, a great meeting person, but unless they're good at shop level, somewhere that will start to break down, they won't have the total respect of their staff.

Nicky manages a medium-sized charity shop chain yet stresses the importance of closeness to the shops and takes the work of shop visits extremely seriously, even though this takes up much of his working time. His last statement was made as direct critique of Chris at ShopsCom.

7.4.2 Identity Assertions

Now we compare Susan's identity assertions when talking to me with those she asserted in practice. Her 'equivalent' meeting was very unlike the ShopsCom meeting for a number of reasons. Because HospiShop is small, Susan line manages the shop managers directly, without any intervening levels of area or regional management. Her equivalent meetings, one might imagine, would therefore be a meeting with her handful of shop managers. However, as the research diary records:

Susan has tried a shops managers meeting to discuss policy and as a 'stress-busting session'. But, she said, one of her managers had ruined it by not accepting that anyone can do anything better than her, and by just telling people how to do it better without listening to them.

Susan saw the meeting become demoralising for the other managers and had never attempted it again.

She'd also tried a social event, a dinner with drinks, and they'd enjoyed it but she hadn't repeated it. They hadn't got much business done.

So all Susan's meetings with her shop managers are done on a one-to-one basis, usually in the shop. And because she visits all the shops fairly often, there is very rarely a formal meeting with the shop manager. The 'meeting' is usually just a chat. Often she'll have just one thing to discuss with the manager, or maybe none at all, and will simply go to the shop to let the managers know she is around and "let them have a good old moan".

The particular 'meeting' we focus on here was with Francis, the shop manager, at HospiShop's charity shop in Park Hill¹. This is Susan's favourite shop because it had been so run-down when she had first taken it over and it had been made very presentable through hard physical work: Susan's husband doing the floors, the van driver and her doing the decorating. The shop was due to open at 9am. I arrived at 9:15am to find it shut and no-one else there. Susan arrived a couple of minutes later, then Jill, who unlocked the door and switched the sign to 'Open'. Susan and Francis were both dressed in jeans and T-shirts – it was a hot July day. The 'meeting' is the chat that goes on between Francis and Susan over the course of Susan's time in the shop – until about 11am. In this case, with just two other people there, my presence was more important than at the ShopsCom meeting. There were no volunteers that morning, which is why Susan had come in and why they were both pleased I had agreed to 'do research' in that shop that morning. I was very much *participant* as well as observer.

[Shop Meeting 1]

The meeting began when Francis arrived at the shop. Susan asked about her recent holiday and Francis shared some details, then they chatted about one of the volunteers winning some money on the national lottery, then about Susan's dog. This chatting occurred whilst Jill opened the shop, turned on the lights and the till, served the first few customers. There was the minimum of interaction with the customers, for Susan and Francis were fully engaged in their chat. I thought this was a bit unprofessional.

As with the ShopsCom examples above, we get a sense of what we mean by professionalism when we think it is *not* achieved. Here, my own sense of professionalism as a pretend shop worker was offended by Francis and Susan's 'idle chatter'. Of course, such chat is not necessarily 'idle' and not unimportant. It is a key generator of the relationship between Susan and her shop managers. Exactly the same process was documented when area managers met their shop managers in ShopsCom and VolShop. Being competent and accountable requires the building and maintenance of good working relationships, often based on performing 'small

¹ Fictional name.

talk' and appearing interested in aspects of each others' personal lives. This was an unbalanced process in that Susan asked more about Francis than Francis asked about Susan, and the same was true in both ShopsCom and VolShop, where the area managers were rarely asked about their lives and never voluntarily gave personal information of this type to shop managers during my fieldwork.

It might be seen as professional, therefore, for those who manage shop managers, in this case Susan, to engage in small talk to build constructive relationships with their staff. The skills of management rely on this type of social interaction. So whilst Susan might appear unprofessional when chatting with Francis in front of customers, from a different perspective she is asserting her professional identity as Head of Shops. The next happening was first mentioned in ~ 3 ~ *Research and Methodology* and is analysed here in more detail:

[Shop Meeting 2]

Susan had brought with her some signs she made yesterday evening and she put them up above the till and on the shop noticeboard. The sign above the till told the till operator, "Remember to always give a receipt," and asked the customer, "Please always expect and wait for a receipt." Susan placed one sign on the crammed noticeboard in the backroom at eye-height on top of other now hidden and perhaps redundant signs. The notice explained very strictly that each transaction must be accompanied by a receipt. Susan had not mentioned this to any shop manager beforehand or consulted with them, and did not even mention it now. If Francis had not asked "Why?" as Susan put up the notice in the backroom, I doubt that Susan would have said anything. The notice was intended to speak for itself, or for her.

"Because we have a stealing problem in one shop," Susan answered.

"Is it our shop?" Francis asked.

"No," confirmed Susan

Susan didn't ask whether Francis thought it was her shop and didn't ask who she thought it was. She didn't explain how giving till receipts relates to theft, and did not mention at all that Francis had to take notice of this new procedure. Francis might well have thought that if the new procedure is because there is stealing in one shop, but not her shop, then the new procedure did not apply to her. Susan wants it to apply to everyone, but missed the chance to confirm this. She acted as though the note was enough and everyone would immediately adhere to it unquestioningly. She did not perform any management to introduce the new procedure.

Francis: "Is this from the top?"

Susan bristled: "I AM the top!"

Four main points emerge from this segment. First, the home-made notices remind us how different this is to both ShopsCom and VolShop, where the Heads of Shops have 'professionals' at their disposal for the production of signs, notices, leaflets, and so on. This is clearly related to the size of the organisation and Susan's nearness, hierarchically, to the shops. It also reflects her relaxed, amateur identity.

Second, Francis assumes that 'the top' is elsewhere. This is because the strict tone and top-down style of the note does not seem to match Susan's usual professional identity, so Francis assumed that senior staff in the hospice – either Susan's line manager or the financial director – had ordered this procedure. She is not used to seeing Susan in a 'boss' role. This shift in Susan's identity assertion was undoubtedly related to my presence. The previous day Susan had asked me about my time at ShopsCom and I had mentioned that Chris Vaughan was very suspicious of shops staff and used external consultants to catch shop staff who failed to give receipts, assuming they were stealing. It was no coincidence that Susan acted 'strictly' the very next day on this very issue, emulating Chris' suspicions and even behaviour. Her assertion 'I am the top!' is a very powerful expression of a new organisational identity, an assertion that is *required* if her new identity is to be created. This new identity is very different to the general 'bottom-up' supportive attitude expressed in her interview quoted above.

Her new stricter organisational identity was not a replacement for the older more relaxed management attitude. Rather it was an *alternative and temporary* professionalism, akin to trying on a new set of clothes to see whether they fit and suit. Apart from putting up the notices in the other shops that day, Susan never acted this way again during my time with HospiShop. She reverted to her previous professional identity, one that avoids gurus and management jargon and instead remains focused on supporting her managers, letting them use their brains, and keeping them happy. This view of Susan's management approach is confirmed by Jim, who drives a van for the shops:

Jim said how good Susan is: "She's there if you need her, you know, but she's never putting her nose in, and the shops appreciate that a lot, I think. And, you know, it works."

The hands-off management approach might appear to contradict the sense that Susan is very close to her shops, but it actually reflects the fact that a strong, close and respectful relationship with her shops and managers involves not interfering with their work.

The contradiction between Susan's usual 'bottom-up' management approach on one hand and her new strictness in the notice on the other goes some way to explaining the third point I take from the segment, which is that she appeared to manage the process of introducing the procedure quite poorly, hoping the sign would do the work. This new stricter identity made her feel uncomfortable and she found it difficult to alter her habitual professional identity: 'being nice' and keeping her shop managers happy. So whilst she may have been able to type and print out this notice when she was alone the evening before and even post it on the shop noticeboard, when she was confronted by the shop managers themselves she reverts to her habitual behaviour and therefore fails to support the notice.

Fourthly and finally, the notice stands out as being one of the only written-down procedures for HospiShop shop managers, highlighting the lack of a 'manual' or detailed set of procedures for the shops. There are verbal understandings about some basic procedures, such as opening times, the reporting of figures, basic health and safety, and banking procedures but very little beyond this. This is very different to large commercial chains like ShopsCom, where the 'manual' is an important document. This lack of a shop managers' manual reflects Susan's view that charity shop professionalism is about trust and autonomy. Susan asserted this trusting hands-off approach as her habitual organising identity. This is not to say she was always happy with her staff, because she was not; as indicated by this research diary segment, from the same 'meeting':

[Shop Meeting 3]
After the short discussion about the notice, Francis went out to the bank to pay-in the shop takings. Susan said: "She'll also stop off for a coffee and do a spot of shopping! Francis is the only one of my managers who takes a full lunch break every day."

When Francis came back with two shopping bags and didn't want the coffee that Susan offered, Susan winked at me. Just then a donor turned up with three bags of clothes. I took the bags and thanked the donor. In the back room I asked Francis where she wanted the bags. "Oh GOD!" she moaned, "I DON'T want them at ALL!" Susan commented, laughing: "Why do you moan about not making money at the same time as you hate the stock, the donors, the customers and the volunteers!" Francis did not respond.

However, Susan did not reprimand or discipline Francis beyond the pointed teasing, explaining to me later, when I asked, that "it wouldn't have any positive effect, just negative, because she'd get to resent me, then the job, then it all gets worse." As she also noted, "charity shop managers are not easy to come by", and while Francis might moan and display a negative attitude to the job, she has "increased sales in the shop considerably". Susan felt that, "in an ideal world, all shop managers would be perfect, but this is reality", so Susan has to make the most of what she has. This involves keeping people as happy as possible and allowing them to work with as little interference as possible.

Professionalism, therefore, is very different in HospiShop, less strident and more pragmatic, less controlling and more trusting. Susan did have the capability to act in a more dictatorial manner, given an external trigger and an internal concern about theft, but she had trouble asserting this identity. Her practical identity assertions ended up mirroring the views given in interviews, though she also 'tried on' another identity.

7.5 VolShop

7.5.1 Identity Statements

A third view of charity shop professionalism comes from Eve Turner of VolShop. As Figure 7.1 shows, Eve is closer to shops than Chris but not as close as Susan. More importantly, Eve focuses strongly on the 'charity' element of the identity while underplaying the 'retail' identity – the exact opposite of Chris. This was recorded in the research diary:

Eve does not really see herself as a retailer, or her main role as retailing. She does not differentiate herself from the charity by using the term 'retailer'. Rather she sees herself as a voluntary sector specialist, a specialist in volunteer management. Retailing is further down her list of concerns. This is extremely different to Chris, and quite different to Susan. It is what makes VolShop 'voluntarist' and contrasts this different way of organising and this different professional identity against the commercialist attitude in ShopsCom.

Eve wants her managers to be 'people managers'. She is not that bothered about their retail background. She particularly wants people with experience of managing volunteers. "They can learn the retailing in three months!" she laughs.

This last statement raises the issue of staff recruitment and training. All interviewees were asked about their ideal shop and area manager. Ten out of eleven Heads who employ area managers feel that retail experience is an essential requirement of such managers. The eleventh is VolShop and does not see retail experience as essential. Nine out of fourteen Heads feel that retail experience is essential for shop managers and three feel it is highly desirable but not essential. The remaining two – VolShop and HospiShop – feel retail experience can actually be a disadvantage for shop managers, because the business is about people and volunteers. For both these charity shop organisations, being able to work with volunteers is perceived as an expert skill that is essential to the charity retail professional.

In VolShop the work of the paid managers – the Head and her small team of Shops Co-ordinators – is less focused on retail. The role involves helping the all-volunteer shops run effectively by developing and recruiting volunteers and is called 'volunteer support' rather than 'shop management'. VolShop is a strongly voluntarist charity shop organisation with a very particular view of what a charity shop professional should be. This view is very different to that held by most of the 'retail focused' charity shop Heads in the study. Only one other Head adopts this attitude to charity retailing – Joe English of Gold Hospice – though others may have sympathy for it.

The explicitness with which VolShop has adopted this approach differs from Gold Hospice, where it emerged in a less forced way. This is related to processes within VolShop in which the organisation very consciously thinks about itself, its role, and its method of operation. My research diary records how this continual process of organisational review impacts on Maxine, a VolShop Shops Co-ordinator:

At a recent Team Meeting they had agreed a definite set of Team Objectives which Maxine had to translate into her own personal objectives. I asked how she did this and she explained the large organisational context. She said the charity had done a Marketing Review which had led to a new Marketing Strategy. This led to a new Volunteer Support Strategy which led on to a Shops Review, a new Shops Strategy, redefined Team Objectives for her Team, and finally Personal Objectives for her.

This is one of the key ways Maxine knows what she is expected to do and gets motivation for her actions - her doings are linked explicitly to the objectives of the organisation. This is an organisationally-explicit organisation.

One of the most basic things Maxine is expected to do, in her words, is: "decide how to act based on an internalisation of personal goals that I have extrapolated by working with others to read and understand the organisation's goals." This is a 'basic doing' that allows her specific everyday and everyminute doings to change. But Maxine's actions and objectives and motivations must be constantly checked and reinforced by Eve, her boss, who checks her team is defining goals that resonate with those of the Team, the shops, the department, and the organisation.

Eve's work is less about delegating to her shop managers and more about managing their management of their own work objectives. She is also involved in ensuring they practically achieve their objectives.

This is a very different type of professionalism to that practised in ShopsCom or HospiShop. It is based on a very explicit focus on constantly redefining the job roles of paid staff in VolShop according to shifting organisational objectives. It is about organisational awareness, about organisational direction, purpose and effectiveness, and about the relations between individual action and organisational outcomes. We might call it 'strategic professionalism'. As well as being more 'charity' and less 'retail' focused, therefore, the charity shop professional in VolShop is expected to be an 'organisational professional', an expert in managing self and change within organisational contexts. In ShopsCom, by contrast, the actual work of organising was never mentioned. It was referred to as 'retailing'.

There was a sense that VolShop paid staff enjoyed not being too retail focused, including those with retail backgrounds like Maxine:

it seemed as though Maxine enjoyed NOT doing retail, enjoyed focusing on people management and volunteer development as an explicit goal of the organisation, as a 'softer', more human, more fun job to do; less cold and rational than figures and retail. She "COULD do retail, I CAN do it", she said, but "I prefer doing something else!" Chris at ShopsCom would argue that she SHOULD be doing retailing, but Maxine has VolShop's formal mission behind her. She says that at the moment she is "doing less retail and more development, to develop the volunteers and shop leaders so THEY are doing retail once the systems are in place".

I believe this position was clearly related to the desire of the staff to resist the view that money and people are mutually exclusive and to accept instead that developing people can also lead to higher profits. There was a strong attitude against any ruthlessness against the volunteers who run the shops and a strong sense of dependency on them. If supporting and developing volunteering is in the best interests of the organisation, then one can argue it is not a sign of weakness to focus on people, but a sign of strength. To this attitude, then, ruthlessness is weakness, just an easy way out, paying people and managing them through fear instead of motivating them using your own skills.

VolShop's definition of charity retail professionalism was thus characterised by a strong commitment to volunteering and a focus on strategic professionalism. Paid managers get 'retailing' done by supporting the volunteers who work in the shops, rather than by focusing on the retailing themselves. This definition of the professional allows Eve to assert her identity as a professional manager of volunteers. Unsurprisingly, she believes this to be a skilled and expert profession to which she belongs. Like Chris and Susan, Eve defines the nature of charity shop professionalism to fit those characteristics that she believes she exhibits, and she asserts certain identities in order to define the nature of charity shop professionalism. The charity shop Head and the charity shop profession are, therefore, mutually constituted by the Heads' identity assertions. In other words, charity shop organising (and professionalism) is what charity shop Heads do.

7.5.2 Identity Assertions

The meeting we will examine in VolShop is more similar to the ShopsCom meeting than the HospiShop meeting, at least in terms of the job roles of its attendees, the number of people involved and the general 'shape' of the meeting. It is called the *Shops Co-ordinators Meeting*, held every 6 to 8 weeks for one or two days in a hired venue, in this case two days in a hotel in Portsmouth. It is chaired (or rather facilitated) by Eve Turner, Head of Shops, and attended by the small team of Shops Co-ordinators that she directly manages. The Shops Co-ordinators (SCs) each offer support directly to a handful of all-volunteer-run shops. Five segments from the meeting are examined below. In the first three, Eve asserts her professionalism according

to her stated position above. In the last two, however, her practical action appears to oppose her 'ideal model'.

[SC Meeting 1]

I was attending the meeting for the second half of the first day so arrived at lunch-time to the appointed venue. No-one was there. The room was empty, threadbare and very cold. After fifteen minutes one of the Shops Co-ordinators turned up, then others appeared. There were five people in addition to me, Eve and four Shops Co-ordinators: Maxine, Bridget, Vicky and Paul. Two people were absent, the fifth Shops Co-ordinator and the Team Secretary. Everyone was dressed smart casual, no jeans, no suits. One of the Shops Co-ordinators was male, everyone else but me was female. We sat around a square table, one or two on each side.

It took half an hour to organise the hotel staff to provide us with lunch, coffee and a heater. Eventually the mediocre sandwiches and thin coffee were gone, the aged gas heater was burning, and the meeting began. The meeting began very playfully, with an impromptu name tag game. It started because Paul wrote "me" on his name tag. So Eve wrote "her" on hers. Vicky wrote "it", Bridget wrote "she" and I wrote "him". With the obvious feminine pronouns used up, Maxine decided to break the mould and wrote "Max".

At this VolShop meeting there was no sense of fear, only a sense of teamwork and communal effort. Compared with ShopsCom, this VolShop meeting had a stronger sense of team and a weaker sense of hierarchy. Everyone was much more vocal than at ShopsCom, where Chris had said he wanted everyone to speak up and say what they think, but this had not happened because his tone, actions and style (in the meeting and outside it) actually discouraged such behaviour. There, people wanted to keep their heads below the parapet. Here, they wanted to join in and be heard.

The 'game' reminded me of the start of the Regional Managers' Meeting at ShopsCom, but also highlighted the important differences: the game was begun by an SC (not the Head) as a piece of relaxed silliness rather than a conscious attempt to set the tone. Everyone joined in the VolShop game, following Paul's lead, including me and Eve. Humour was a strong component of the meeting and, later, a rude sexual innuendo was made at Eve's expense at which everyone laughed uproariously, especially Eve. No-one would have tried this with Chris.

The meeting felt more democratic and less nervous than the equivalent meeting at ShopsCom, reflecting Eve's view that she has been successful in generating a "strong, vibrant, innovative culture in my team". In the meeting analysed above (7.3.2), Chris also believed he wanted this type of organising 'culture', hence his attempt to relax his team. But he was unable to assert this professional identity in practice and during my time at ShopsCom, he tried to develop openness in meetings only that once. Conversely, Eve works very hard to be the professional she wants to be, to consciously assert her version of charity shop professionalism. We might say that Eve operates more often at the fifth level of selfhood. Her team is more open and relaxed because she has pursued this identity consciously, vigorously and in a more sustained

way than Chris. In the next segment Eve asserts this identity by asking the meeting to specify its objectives:

*[SC Meeting 2]
They discussed the objective for the next item on the agenda, explicitly, at Eve's bidding. They discussed it at length, a group of people trying to agree the exact wording.*

Here professionalism is asserted in two ways. First there was a concerted attempt to reach a consensus. This was time consuming, but ensured that everyone understood why the agenda item was to be discussed and everyone felt ownership of the agenda item and its objective. This was very deliberate on Eve's part and very different from Chris, who would have seen it as a waste of time. Second, professionalism was demonstrated by planning the planning of the planning. The agenda item is about a group of meetings to be held in actual shops by the Shops Co-ordinators over the next six months. At these meetings, future volunteer staffing arrangements will be planned. The agenda item therefore plans these planning meetings. The discussion of the objective for the agenda item is the planning of the planning of the planning. Again, this characterises the type of professionalism valued by Eve but that Chris would find tedious. It IS tedious, as even those at the VolShop Meeting would accept, but they nevertheless see it as necessary enough to make the effort worthwhile.

The third example involves Eve asserting her professionalism by acting as an expert facilitator, as someone who empowers her team:

*[SC Meeting 3]
Eve tries to make the SCs feel it's their meeting. She reflects problems they have back to them to give them a sense of autonomy. She notes pointedly that people don't always want autonomy. It can be scary for them. It is responsibility. In hierarchies, people are trained out of responsibility and they learn to fear it.

Throughout the meeting, Eve produces pages of flip-charts, recording what is said for everyone to see, not just keeping minutes. These are all stuck on the walls so that no ideas are 'lost' and everyone's contributions are valued.*

In writing up the flip-charts and trying to manage her team meetings in a facilitative manner, Eve is very deliberately trying to be a certain type of professional manager. This sense of striving does not mean to imply that she is constantly working against the grain of her own feelings, for she was quite clear that she would not work for another charity shop organisation unless it had similar principles. She is genuinely and emotionally committed to promoting volunteering and developing facilitative team-oriented management practices. Anything else, she felt, was unprofessional. But her sense of striving did sometimes come up against aspects of herself that wanted to act another way. On two occasions in the meeting there was some departure from her stated position. In the following quote, the commitment to volunteerism is challenged:

[SC Meeting 4]

Eve asked if the SCs had seen the new sticker to go on the front doors of all the shops. "It will go on" she said, "and then STAY THERE!" She seemed exasperated, as though this was an issue they've had trouble with in the past. "And don't listen to those who moan 'There's film on the door.'" She said this last in a heavy impersonation of a pathetic, annoying older female volunteer - a critical and frustrated impersonation of this type of character. "In fact, don't leave it to the shops, because they'll put it upside-down, on its side, at an angle or what have you. Just do it yourself."

This is the type of the thing, she explained to them, that will be in the New Shops' Manual, which should be available soon. "The Manual will be far more prescriptive, if I'VE got anything to do with it, for example where to hang labels, pricing strategies, stuff like that. Unless the Review of Shops says we should have local people doing it, and telling the centre. If the Review supports or endorses those sorts of things centrally, then they'll be there in the Manual and will certainly make things much clearer."

This is an important statement about centralisation, uniformity, standardisation. It seems to imply a desire to demote the importance of volunteers and reduce their autonomy. Does this not go against the grain of VolShop strongly supporting volunteering?

As the research diary indicates, this is an important statement by Eve. It contradicts much of her 'official' speak, for example in interview or when introducing me to the 'mission statement' and 'values' of VolShop's charity. It shows the near universal human desire for things to be easy. While she talks of a commitment to volunteering, and while I have no doubt this is genuine, she has nevertheless faced for many years the reality of managing volunteers who are predominantly older women with a somewhat different view of how to run charity shops. Her comments indicate a strong sense that the volunteers are unprofessional – they are too incompetent to put a sticker neatly on the front doors of VolShop's shops; will assume the stickers are unable to go on glass strengthened by film; will assume the HQ does not know that the shops need 'film-proof' stickers. She wishes that it would be easy, that the stickers would be handed out, the volunteers would put them up on the correct date in the correct manner and without complaint or misunderstanding or moaning about the film on the glass. But she knows this will not happen. Volunteers may give their time for free, may allow charity shops to be incredibly profitable and raise millions of pounds for charitable causes, but some volunteers mean trouble for a Head of Shops that wants things done. From the Heads' perspective, some volunteers are incompetent, unreliable and uncooperative.

So Eve asks her SCs to do the stickers themselves, correctly and on-time, temporarily ignoring the longer-term aim of getting the SCs to delegate more. This *need for ease* is also powerfully expressed by both Chris at ShopsCom and Susan at HospiShop, in different ways. Chris' hierarchy and distance from the shops allows him to avoid these problems as far as possible. He has contractual relations with as many people as possible – he pays as many staff as

ShopsCom can afford – and relies on a many-tiered hierarchical structure to ensure the difficulty of implementation is faced by people far away from him in organisational terms. Susan takes a very hands-off approach, so although she is very close to the shops, she does not for the most part take the mental attitude that things have to be done this way or that. She knows her shops, shop managers and volunteers well, but has no pretence to centralise procedures beyond the very basics. The aberration of the notice about receipts, discussed above, was the exception that proved the rule.

Eve's delegating, team-creating, volunteer-celebrating managing style is thus seen to buckle under her own memory of experiences with volunteers and she states a desire for greater centralisation in the shops. There was another very similar example during this meeting – a memo written by Eve in what she called her 'diktat style'. Dealing with a crucial Health and Safety issue, the memo told the SCs what to do in no uncertain terms. "You MUST do this" she underlined, handing out the memo. Yet she also excused her tone to the SCs, explaining it apologetically: "Sorry to be so strict, but ..."

Her managerial professionalism is therefore a complex phenomenon. She strongly supports the concept of volunteering but can become frustrated with the practical difficulties of managing volunteers. She believes in teamwork and autonomy for her Shops Co-ordinators but wishes to centralise and standardise the shops, reducing their autonomy. She wants to empower, but can resort to ordering people to do things. These are not untenable contradictions. They represent human complexity, the confusing mixture of ideas and feelings that occurs when people organise. Striving to be a certain type of a manager – striving to express your professional identity – is just that: striving. It is a process that meets 'practical' or 'real-world' difficulties that challenge your ideas and identity. In this final segment, Eve's striving to be a team-developing empowering facilitator just did not work.

[SC Meeting 5]

Maxine was designated to lead a discussion on introducing something akin to a volunteer's 'job description' into the shops. Here was Eve delegating and giving her team the chance to be leaders for a moment.

Bridget wanted them to agree what they should say to the volunteers about their own (the SCs) jobs and the organisation's expectations on them.

This went into a heated discussion which involved Maxine's losing control of the item, Eve wresting control back and debating strongly with Bridget. Eve then unilaterally instigated a brainstorming session to defuse and diffuse the ideas, open peoples' minds up again. She turned on Bridget strongly when Bridget interrupted Paul during the brainstorming. Vicky asked for the second time "What are we doing, again?" as though she can't follow the path of the discussion or is questioning that path.

Maxine complained they were going round in circles. Vicky complained the goalposts kept being moved. She needs 'order', it seemed. Bridget said very sarcastically, "I love this; democracy in action" and turned to

me and asked, "What do you think of our democracy?" I smiled sheepishly and said nothing. Maxine wanted to "put it to bed," presumably meaning this little part of the discussion, so she could move to the next part of the item. Bridget said "But it's important!" Eve led a protracted discussion about the exact wording of a statement about VolShop's expectations of the SCs - literally 'politically correct,' in that it dealt with all the politics.

The whole thing seemed to me to be a meaningless red herring, a discussion based on misunderstandings and cross purposes. It came out of Eve's anxiety that Maxine was leading the item (she was desperate for it to go well), combined with her exasperation with the accumulation of negative points by Bridget over the whole course of the meeting. Added to this was the seeming irrelevance of Bridget's point - it was not clear why she cared what the volunteers think of the SCs jobs and the organisational context of the SCs. Conversely, one can see that this IS a very important point - it is about the whole relationship that SCs cultivate with their volunteers and the way they present themselves as agents of VolShop, particularly the difference between:

- portraying themselves as people forced to act in certain ways because this is what VolShop demands, even if they don't agree, and keeping 'in' with the volunteers by viewing VolShop as the enemy, or
- portraying themselves as agents of VolShop who support it and its policies and who are therefore prepared to disagree with the volunteers and take the difficult path of trying to persuade them of the need for whatever policy is being introduced.

With the hindsight provided by analysis of other parts of the research diary, it is clear that this discussion got out of control partly because of underlying tensions between Bridget and the rest of the team. Eve had told me earlier that she was worried that Bridget could not break bad news to the volunteers in a positive way. She also said she thought Bridget did not 'buy in' to the SC Team, preferring to be 'the friend of the volunteers' even when this conflicted with her role as an SC team member. At a later date, Maxine told me something similar. The ambition to improve the volunteer support, the shops and the money they take is apparently not fully supported by Bridget, who appears to prefer a management style that keeps the volunteers happy and ensures she is liked. This sounds quite similar to Susan of HospiShop. The two alternatives at the end of the segment are strongly related to identification issues - whether you identify with the organisation or the volunteers, in those situations where you face the choice.

The segment is also important in that it shows Eve slipping out of her identity as the team-developing empowering facilitator, back into it, and back out of it again in a very short space of time. This elision shows the fluidity of professionalism as identity, hopping repeatedly from one way of being and doing to another. It shows, as if in slow motion, the moments and process of confusion; of not knowing what organisational identity to cling to or what part to perform in the theatre of professionalism. First, Eve is letting Maxine take the item. Then she is jumping in to debate with Bridget. Then she tries to force an open facilitative technique - the brainstorm. Then she aggressively polices the rules of this game. Next she went quiet for a bit, not knowing what to do. Then she took over and facilitated a discussion about wording that seemed

pointless – there was no way the words would ever be used when talking to volunteers about their new 'job description'. Her confusion substantially increased the tensions in the meeting, and vice versa. In this case, then, Eve was unable to assert her professional identity; or, rather, her attempt to assert it did not have the desired result and she asserted other identities using authoritative and facilitative management at the same time.

Although all the case studies are relatively successful in financial terms, VolShop is the least successful of the three. This is mainly because it explicitly works to three potentially contradictory objectives:

- to make money for the charity,
- to raise awareness of the charity and its work, and
- to support and develop volunteering.

This may seem as odds with Figure 7.1 where VolShop is shown identifying more strongly with 'Charity' than 'Retailing'. This is because when she discusses her ideal model of the charity shop professional, Eve implicitly emphasises the differentiating characteristic of her approach – the charity focus. In the practical, everyday work of being Head, however, she often pays as much attention to the 'retail' issues as the 'charity' issues. The work of her and her team is in fact determined by three separate and at times mutually exclusive objectives. Measuring VolShop using only financial measures is, therefore, to measure it on just one of its three objectives.

7.6 Understanding Professionalism

7.6.1 Three Versions of Charity Shop Professionalism

Three very different versions of professionalism were explored in this chapter. In ShopsCom there was a more strident attempt to see the charity shop professional as a retailer, which led to greater efforts to introduce 'payment' into the shops, especially of staff but also through more expensive locations, shopfits and stock generation costs. ShopsCom represents a particularly strong version of the hegemonic version of charity shop professionalism and has been a key organisation in the charity shop professionalisation process. The performance of professionalism amongst senior management tends to centre on the maintenance of an autocratic organisation with strong line management, multiple hierarchical layers, and a power structure based on limited access to knowledge and information about the organisation. The dominant organisational culture in ShopsCom involves considerable distance between the senior managers and the shops themselves, mediated by the line-managed hierarchy. This distance allows the Head of Shops to simplify his organisational work and to successfully perform his version of professionalism. This led to very high profits in the mid 1990s but a slowdown in recent years. The distance also led to substantial discontent from people at shop and middle management level and to decision-making practices that are filtered through layers of data, unaware of the social and cultural nature of the shops on the ground. Attempts in one meeting to modify this organisational culture through the assertion of a more team-oriented organisational professionalism failed because of the strongly held habits and predilections of the Head of Shops.

In HospiShop there is no distance between the Head and the shops. There is also a general lack of striving, a very limited sense of idealism in the performance of professionalism. Susan is very much a pragmatic professional, who aims simply to keep the shop workers (paid and unpaid) happy as long as they make money and follow basic procedures such as banking and health and safety. To Susan, charity shop professionalism is about being neither particularly charity focused nor particularly retail focused, but rather balancing the two. The best test of a charity shop professional, to Susan, is their social closeness to the shops. Her shops do not have a vibrant sense of team spirit, but neither are they characterised by the fear and distrust that permeated ShopsCom. Susan tried to be top-down for a day, but was pretty bad at it.

In VolShop there is an even stronger sense of striving than in ShopsCom, but in almost the opposite direction. Eve and her team of Shops Co-ordinators are committed to promoting volunteers and volunteering and working closely within the culture of the parent charity. This means demoting 'retailing' concerns and rejecting the payment of staff in shops. While pursuing an 'anti-professionalisation' agenda in terms of shop expenditure, therefore, Eve and her SCs powerfully assert 'a charity shop professionalism' that centres on 'charity'. The charity shop

professional is someone who knows that charity shops are different from private sector retail outlets and celebrates this by creating a new profession – that of the charity-focused charity shop professional. This also involves running the organisation as democratically and inclusively as possible, devolving responsibility to the volunteers in the shops, and stressing the importance of volunteering as a principle. In practice, this strident volunteerism faces challenges which cannot always be overcome. Understandably, VolShop's paid managers do not find it easy to practice these ideals and there is sometimes a tendency to take the easier option. But they do often accept the challenges consciously and conscientiously and there was a strong, supportive, democratic team culture, at least amongst all but one of the paid managers. The volunteers in shops, however, expressed concerns very similar to those expressed by ShopsCom volunteers. In the end, it seems, even a professional culture aimed explicitly at valuing volunteers becomes the target for volunteer complaint, criticism and distrust. Both of the organisations run by Heads who asserted conscious professional performances seemed to alienate their volunteers, regardless of the content of their professionalism. Only HospiShop and two other very small charity shop organisations maintained a sense of mutual trust between the volunteers and the Head of Shops. Size clearly matters, and where there is a lack of face-to-face contact between a Head and the shops, the shops distrust the Head.

So the nature of 'charity retailing professionalism' is contested and open to interpretation. The three understandings and everyday assertions of charity retail professionalism explored above are not equally distributed amongst the sector or the twenty interviewed Heads. The first meaning, represented by ShopsCom, is by far the most common. Whilst not many Heads are quite as extreme as Chris Vaughan in their attachment to retailing and their rejection of charity, 13 of the twenty Heads would show a similar pattern to ShopsCom on Figure 7.1 in relation to the 'Retail' and 'Charity' axes.

No Heads were 'Strong' on *both* retailing and charity in their definitions of the charity retail professional, suggesting these are mutually exclusive. A mutually exclusive relationship between being 'a retail professional' and being 'a charity professional' would result, I believe, from the view that these are distinct purposes for charity shop organisations, requiring distinct skills and expertise. While five Heads balanced being a retailer and being a charity person by avoiding extremes in one or the other, therefore, the other fifteen took a more extreme view, *striving* to be a 'retail professional' (13 Heads) or a 'charity professional' (2 Heads).

In total twelve Heads believed the charity shop professional should identify strongly with their shops. Eight of these run very small, small or medium chains of shops and all made a point of criticising the Heads of the large chains for being "out of touch with their shops and customers" (Vivian Hodgson), justifying their own membership of the charity retail professional by reference to the importance of "knowing your shops" (Nicky Legge). Four Heads of large chains believed the charity shop professional should identify strongly with their shops but complained that it was very difficult to find time to visit the shops as often as they would like. They did not feel this

denied them membership of the charity shop profession but did stress they were trying hard to make more time available for shop visits. Knowing what is going on in their shops was deemed to be key to maintaining their status as a charity shop professional.

Historically the process of charity shop professionalisation was led mainly by those charity retail professionals with the strongest identification with 'retailing' on Figure 7.1. Ashley March of Navy Hospice captures the sense of mission of this type of charity retail professional:

When I arrived I found something which had started out as a brave venture 10-12 years ago by amateurs, and had turned into a large profitable company which was trying to be professional. I knew that I could provide that professionalism, that was where my skills were, what my training was all about.

The professional retail identity and the need for status were thus key drivers of the charity shop professionalisation process. As we saw in ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift*, ex-private sector retailers moved to the charity shops environment and needed to take something with them from their previous experience, to hold something stable. Most were clear that they were professional retailers and therefore what they had to do was professionalise charity retailing. Being professional entailed doing professionalism. Because personal identity is tied so closely to notions of the professional, the term is rarely meant as a neutral description. Rather, 'the professional' generally feels positive and 'normatively good' about his or her identity as a professional. From this flows the assumption that professionalism and professionalisation are also necessarily good. However, these terms 'professional' and 'professionalism' are generally used rather sloppily.

7.6.2 Three Meanings of Professional

Three meanings of professional emerged from the fieldwork:

- *Professional as paid, as opposed to unpaid or voluntary or amateur.*
- *Professional as a member of a specific expert work community, as opposed to a non-professional.*
- *Professional as broadly competent, effective, business-like, well-organised and organisationally 'good', as opposed to 'unprofessional', incompetent, ineffective, un-business-like, badly organised and organisationally 'bad'.*

These meanings clearly relate to one another, but they are distinct. There are also conflicts *within* each meaning over what counts as professional. These are discussed elsewhere in more detail (Goodall 2001d). Here I offer a brief summary.

The first meaning of professional is clearly important in relation to debates about whether to rely on volunteers or pay staff. It is also worth noting that the distinction between paid staff and volunteers is not always as clear as might be expected: all volunteers have some form of income, whether through the state or from a working partner; many members of paid staff work longer hours than they should, which constitutes a form of volunteering for the charity, particularly if such work is not related to their own job.

The second meaning of professional relates to 'trade communities' with a sense of belonging, with policed boundaries, with notions of acceptable practice, and with a belief in the trade's expertise. A number of professions were uncovered through the fieldwork (marketing managers, doctors, social workers, nurses, surveyors and retailers). These usually rely on a belief in the expert nature of the professional's work and see this expertise as bestowing status, a valuable commodity within the complex and differentiated division of labour of the international political economy. A profession delimits an area of special knowledge or skill and self-regulates its members.

Larson notes that professions can be seen as attempts to "trade one order of scarce resources – special knowledge and skills – into another – social and economic rewards" (1977: xvii). I would argue that a sense of belonging and attachment, through personal identity, is one very important social reward. Professions operate as a focus for the expression of a personal work-related identity. Nixon (2000) discusses this type of professionalism in relation to the advertising industry in the 1950s and 1960s. He shows how conflicts over what it meant to be an advertising professional represented social and cultural differences between advertising practitioners.

In the charity shop context there are as many views of what the charity shop professional should be as there are charity shop Heads, although these do coalesce around a few key perspectives. There is significant conflict over which specific knowledge and skills should be valued amongst charity shop Heads, reflecting conflicts over the very nature of the charity shop profession, as we have seen.

Knowledge is one of the most important markers of a profession, but professions often portray their knowledge narrowly, focusing on the technical expertise needed to gain entry to the profession. However, professions also depend upon more habitual knowledge, particularly different perceptions of and assumptions about organisations and organising. Professions are cultural phenomena marked by cultural elements – habits, assumptions, norms and values – but tend to be portrayed more rationally: as coherent, clearly bounded entities characterised by easily defined activities and specialist technical knowledge.

The third meaning of professional is the most common, the most ambiguous and the most important. Yet it is not mentioned in academic literature about professionalism. This is 'broadly competent, business-like, well-organised, or organisationally good', as in the following fictional but illustrative phrases:

"It's not professional to mix business with pleasure."

"He'll do a good job, he's very professional."

"It needs doing professionally."

There is an important distinction between this meaning of professional and the second meaning discussed above: you do not have to be 'a professional' to be professional. Conversely there are also important links between these two meanings: 'a professional' is often expected to 'be professional'. The being and doing of professionalism under this third meaning are less fixed and stable than the identity associated with being a professional. Professionalism is applied to people based on their actions and interactions. It is an asserted and yet fluid identity. Of course, being a member of a profession is also a continually performed process, but it is also strongly ascribed: some professionals, such as doctors or lawyers, rarely lose their professional status regardless of their actions. Many professions attempt to regulate the actions of their members by ensuring they act professionally, but only the smallest number of members' actions are in fact 'assessed' in any way. Returning to the example of doctors, whilst all of them are members of a profession, and their professional bodies assume their members' professionalism, in practice there are obviously wide variations in the professionalism of the actual actions of member doctors. Professionalism under this third meaning is also a more democratic term in that it can be applied to low as well as high status work – a road-sweeper can be very professional, regardless of the fact that few people will regard her as a member of a profession or of the professional 'class'.

There is therefore a difference of degree between being a professional and being professional. The former is *more* of an ascribed characteristic; the latter is *more* of a continually asserted and generated one. A professional can be judged as such because of her ascribed status and this holds for some period of time, whereas being seen as professional depends on her most recently asserted acts and is less easily carried from one interaction to another. A reputation for professionalism *can* be developed and carried from one situation to another, whether or not you are a professional, but this is always more fragile than the ascribed status of a member of a profession.

Professionalism is also distinct from the first meaning of professional (as paid), though there is a tendency to conflate these two meanings. It is assumed (quite understandably) that someone who is paid to undertake an activity should be competent, effective, business-like, and well-organised, but this is not always the case. Likewise it is not always true that volunteers or amateurs are incompetent, ineffective, un-business-like and badly organised. Professional as paid is an ascribed identity based on a relatively permanent status, whereas professionalism is an ascribed identity based on more fluid practical assertions.

7.6.3 Conclusions

Almost everybody wants to *be* professional. That is why professionalism is about identity. Professionalism is a daily striving but is also habitual. It is a resource for deciding your actions, but also a post-hoc justification. Professionalism is performative and practical – you want to

appear professional, but must assert this in practice. Professional as broadly competent, well-organised, business-like and organisationally 'good' is an *actualised* identity, implicitly expressed in action (including talk). As a practised activity, professionalism is somewhat messy, yet it is also the most normative of the three definitions of professional, with the strongest moral power. Professionalism is thus a very important term in organisational and workplace environments. Being seen to act in a competent, business-like manner is essential for the vast majority of workers. Indeed, professionalism might be seen as a development of the 'accountability' discussed by Garfinkel in his ethnomethodological studies (Garfinkel 1967, Heritage 1980).

Chris, Susan and Eve define the nature of charity shop professionalism to fit those characteristics that they believe they exhibit; and assert certain identities in order to define the nature of charity shop professionalism. The charity shop Head and the charity shop profession are, therefore, mutually constituted by the Heads' identity assertions. In other words, charity shop organising (and professionalism) is what charity shop Heads do. Whilst the heads of many organisations claim to have far less power than others perceive them to have, these Heads of charity shops have all demonstrated the capacity to define what it means to be a successful charity shop professional, and in each case their definition closely matches what they perceive to be their own strengths or preferences. Further, their definitions are not confined to their own minds but rather colonise their organisations and ensure that, firstly, it is more difficult to challenge their professionalism, status and authority, and, secondly, that people with similar identities are attracted to their organisations and promoted more easily than those with different identities. Thus processes of identity assertion, professionalism, authority, charity shop organising and professionalisation relate to each other and are all mutually constitutive.

Conclusions

8.1 Contributions to Knowledge

This final chapter discusses six contributions to knowledge made by this thesis.

1. It offers an innovative combination of empirical materials: charity shop organisations; the voluntary sector; the heads of organisations; discourses of professionalism; and identities of organising.
2. It provides the first analysis of charity shop professionalisation from the perspective of those who made it happen; and offers policy recommendations about the future of charity shop organising.
3. It develops theories of identity: by positing a five-level understanding of selfhood; by distinguishing three separate identification processes; by suggesting that personal, organisational and sectoral identities are related and co-emergent; and by arguing that identities must be studied as 'produced-in-interaction' as well as received from 'external' discourses.
4. It develops theories of professionalism by moving beyond the limited view of 'a professional' as a member of an expert occupational group towards 'professional' as a fluid but powerfully normative description that can be applied to all organisational actors and activities.
5. It demonstrates the overall thesis argument: that identity processes are a crucial influence on the activity of people in organisational contexts and the outcomes of that activity. In other words, cultural analysis is indispensable to explanations of economic phenomena.
6. Finally, it addresses the ways in which identity processes and economic outcomes are mediated through places and spaces.

8.2 Empirical Materials

This thesis offers an innovative combination of five empirical materials: charity shop organisations; the voluntary sector; the heads of organisations; discourses of professionalism; and identities of organising. Some of these are under-researched in their own right. Discourses of professionalism are particularly noticeable for their absence, with most studies failing to appreciate that being professional is different to being a professional, and is an extremely powerful and complex identification in British organisational life, as discussed below (8.5). The voluntary sector has been almost completely ignored by economic and cultural geography. Perhaps surprisingly, charity shops are currently a quite popular research focus in geography. Two studies have included charity shop Heads (Gregson *et al* 2002, Parsons 2002), but neither has taken Heads very seriously or treated them as a heterogeneous group, nor have they examined Heads' identities or the production of their discourses of professionalism and professionalisation. Voluntary sector studies itself contains few, if any, studies of organisational identity (2.4.6).

The massive literature on identity has paid very little attention to organising identities. Where identity has been examined in organisational contexts (e.g. McDowell 1997), the focus has usually been on the 'traditional' identities (gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class) rather than identities directly relating to organisational practice. Studies of organising identities are becoming more common in the social sciences (e.g. Casey 1995, Jenkins 1996, du Gay 1996b, Parker 2000) but very few focus on Heads, preferring to assess the subjugation of 'workers' to externally produced discourses without asking where these discourses come from or how they are culturally produced. Law (1994) and Schoenberger (1997) are the notable exceptions here. There are also relatively few studies of Heads more generally, and those that exist tend to be pro-managerialist and rationalist (e.g. Peters and Waterman 1982) or treat culture as atomistic and undifferentiated (see 2.4.3 above).

This combination of empirical materials is not simply a matter of choosing diverse elements from a menu and somehow joining them together. On the contrary, I believe the five elements all require each other. To understand the nature of 'economic' organisation, we need to explore non-traditional organisations. To understand organisations, we must pay attention to those at their head. To understand organisation heads, we must study their identities and their identification processes. And to develop our theories of identity we must be ready to analyse non-traditional and inchoate economic organisations and their heads. As well as theoretical insight, however, these empirical materials also offer policy recommendations, as the next section shows.

8.3 Charity Shop Professionalisation

This thesis provides the first analysis of charity shop professionalisation from the perspective of those who made it happen; and offers policy recommendations about the future of charity shop organising. Through analysing a selection of second generation Heads it demonstrates the importance of identity in the charity shop professionalisation process. Almost all of these had private sector retail experience and were recruited partly because of this. Almost all of them were attracted to their new role because it allowed them to 'remain a retailer', a key identity assertion. Many of them were also attracted by the 'challenge' that charity shops represented: to build an organisational structure, to expand the number of shops, and to professionalise the current operation. This offered them status and a sense of personal impact. Identity, then, was key to professionalisation.

In comparing private sector retailing with charity shop organising, most Heads noted the initial differences they encountered but also stressed the retailing similarities and the fact that charity shops *shouldn't* be different. Stressing the *initial* differences allowed them to portray the enormity of the challenge they had met and overcome. Emphasising the retailing similarities allowed them to characterise charity shops as retail outlets and thereby assert their retailing identities and feel comfortable. Many Heads behaved similarly to Chris, who built a large, hierarchical structure to protect him from both the parent charity and the actual shops. This led to rapid growth, professionalisation and success. But from 1998-2001, all the large charity shop organisations in the mould of ShopsCom suffered from a severe recession.

This version of professionalisation has been dominant and has claimed the term 'professionalisation' for itself. It is therefore difficult for those within the sector to see other versions of professionalisation. However, three main alternatives can be identified. First, Susan at HospiShop adopts a 'minimal professionalisation', which centres on being very close to the shops while avoiding any interference or active management, except when things go wrong. This trust-based approach does include some basic professionalisation, most particularly the introduction of paid managers and the maintenance of simple procedures and standards for cleanliness, banking, and health and safety. It has been enormously successful for HospiShop, which performed very strongly during the charity shop recession of 1998-2001. This trust-based version of professionalisation is used by only a few other charity shop organisations, partly because it is much easier in small organisations; but it is currently being developed by Oxfam, the largest charity shop organisation of all (Goodall 2001b: 48).

Joe English of Gold Hospice and Vivian Hodgson of Violet Hospice offer a second type of charity shop professionalisation. This is based on a strong integration of the shops and the charity. At Gold Hospice, there are well-established procedures for offering professional

bereavement counselling through the shops and a shop volunteer programme designed to maximise the benefits that volunteering can offer to a bereaved person. At Violet Hospice the fundraising and shops are directed by one person, but, unlike a 'first generation' Head, Vivian has a long background in private sector retailing. Rather than a fundraiser keeping an occasional eye on a few shops, we have a retailer running shops and appeals. This leads to significant synergy between these two methods of raising funds. Both hospices enjoy strong support from volunteers and donors of goods and performed well despite the 1998-2001 downturn.

Eve at VolShop offers the third version of charity shop professionalisation. This involves a strong commitment to volunteer-only shops. VolShop performed relatively well in 1998-2001, mainly because the all-volunteer policy gave it a low cost base so the drop in sales did not necessitate major cost-cutting measures or redundancies. At VolShop, the charity shops are multi-purpose: they raise money, they raise awareness of the charity's issues, and they develop volunteering. There is also a degree of integration between the shops and the charity, but less synergy than in Gold and Violet Hospices, because the shop volunteers identify less with the charity's immediate work and because most charity staff do not really 'understand' the shops. The paid VolShop staff are between these two camps, supporting the shops and strongly committed to the principles of charity and voluntarism, even if the identifications are not as strongly returned.

This gives four main alternatives to charity shop Heads:

1. *Traditional Professionalisation*: continue the high-cost professionalisation process.
2. *Contemporary Professionalisation*: reduce central management costs, central control, and interference by introducing trust-based management.
3. *Charity Professionalisation*: develop the charitable role of the shops by integrating the charities purposes into the shops (e.g. first aid training in British Red Cross shops, defibrillators in British Heart Foundation Shops, cancer awareness days in Imperial Cancer Research Fund or Cancer Research Campaign shops, mental health talks publicised in Mind shops, etc.) or by increasing the links between shops and other forms of fundraising (e.g. appeals, legacies).
4. *Volunteer Professionalisation*: reduce shop-level management costs through (re)introducing volunteer-only shops supported by professionally-trained volunteer managers with retail skills, rather than managed by retailers without volunteer management training.

The financial data suggests that continued professionalisation of the traditional variety – heavy staff costs, increasingly expensive shopfits and stock generation – has met its limits for two main reasons. First, there is an upper price that can be charged for most second-hand donated goods. Second, the number of charity shops is near its upper limit in terms of the markets for volunteers, donated goods, shop sites and custom. There are at least three alternative versions

of professionalisation, more if they are combined. Another alternative is discovering a new concept altogether, a new model of what the charity shop can be. Examples might include a charity superstore selling a greater diversity of donated goods, such as large furniture ranges, electrical goods, bikes, even cars (the second-hand car dealer you *can* trust!); or the expansion of charities into mainstream retailing, selling bought-in new goods like other retailers, such as a food supermarket (see Goodall 2001c for a further discussion, relating charity shops to the social economy).

The selection of these alternatives will strongly relate to the personal identities of the charity shop Heads. I therefore suggest that Heads be made aware, first, of the alternatives (and encouraged to think about them strategically), and, second, of the role their own identities may play in their decision-making. This dissemination will be carried out at the 2002 Annual Charity Shops Conference in July, where I have been invited to present findings from this research. This awareness-raising exercise may not alter Heads' decisions and most may resort to the things they know about and are comfortable with – 'I'm not doing *that*; I don't know a *thing* about fundraising!' However, it may increase reflexivity and perhaps generate some 'level five' assertions of selfhood. This last point signals the third contribution of this thesis, theories of identity.

8.4 Theories of Identity

This thesis develops theories of identity: by positing a five-level understanding of selfhood; by distinguishing three separate identification processes; by suggesting that personal, organisational and sectoral identities are related and co-emergent; and by arguing that identities must be studied as 'produced-in-interaction' as well as received from 'external' discourses.

8.4.1 Five (or Six) Levels of Selfhood

Five levels of selfhood were distinguished in section 2.3.2: to feel (exist), to have learnt you are a thing, to have learnt you are a particular sort of thing, to know cognitively that you are a distinct self, and to try cognitively to be what you want to be. These are not offered as categories but rather as points along a continuous spectrum of self-awareness. This schema was particularly useful in mapping various theoretical approaches to identity, showing that these distinct meanings of self are often conflated and confused.

This schema suggests that there are degrees of assertiveness of one's identity. For example, at level three, Chris Vaughan is a man and does not have to work hard to be a man. Indeed, it is so easy that he is unlikely to know when he is asserting masculine traits – it all feels natural. As Jenkins notes, gender is learnt through the very earliest childhood socialisation, almost simultaneously with learning that we are human (not a table and not a pig). Being human and being male are very deep senses of self.

However, not all identities feel so 'essential'. Organising identities, in particular, are learnt from the age of around 16. Being a retailer is a shallower, less fundamental, sense of self. At one stage in life, perhaps in their early careers, the current charity shop Heads would have tried hard to 'be' a retailer, would have gone through their traineeships and attempted to imitate or at least learn from those around them. At this time they would have been closer to level five, more assertive, striving to be something that they felt they were not, but could become. Level five does not necessitate an awareness of identity *theory*. Hetherington (1998) discusses some overt 'identity politics' amongst people with subaltern lifestyles such as certain gay men. They are aware not just of themselves or their distinctiveness but also of ideas about identity, which makes them ultra-reflexive about their identities and able to use their identities to political ends. This might be a sixth level of selfhood. Level five is about striving to be something; and the young private sector retailers that were later to become charity shop Heads would, I argue, have been operating somewhere around this level. As their careers developed, as they received assurances from others that they were retailers (through promotions to 'retail' positions, through being talked of as a 'retailer', through calling themselves a 'retailer' and not being attacked for it) this sense of self would have become deeper. It can never become like

their gender, but we might say it is as the top end of level three, with gender and human-ness at the bottom of level three. There is no discernible border between level three and five, and sometimes we have to strive to assert even the most fundamental of our identities, but there are differences of degree.

So 'retailer' is a relatively shallow sense of self compared with gender but relatively deep compared with level five senses of self. This depth allowed some Heads to talk of retailing as something quite essential: recall Ashley March and Sasha Grant talking of having retailing in their blood, because it was their father's job. This sense of essentialism could quite obviously be analysed using a Freudian sense of oedipal father-identification. The point is that, to them, this identity was learnt quite early and so feels deeper and more natural.

In this context, the move to charity shops is seen as a clear challenge to identity. The importance of stressing the 'retail' nature of charity shops becomes obvious. The retailing identity that had become a level three sense of self to many of these people because of their careers, suddenly had to be reasserted, almost at level five. The challenge was not usually from the charity – they recruited you *because* you were a retailer. But generally the shops that were handed to these second generation Heads were not the retail outlets they were used to. As Chris said, they were 'scruffy' and 'tertiary'. Because of the close relationship between organisational and personal identity (see 8.4.3 below), this was a dangerous association for anyone concerned about their career. Let us not forget that, however benevolently charity shops are thought of today, back in the 1970s they often had what Sasha Grant referred to as the "credibility of a leper colony" and, socially, were considered quite unacceptable places to shop by much of the population. Second-hand goods were very much seen as only for 'the poor' and for many people pride forbade wearing charity shop clothing. Even today, certain people will buy something from a charity shop and ask for it to go in a supermarket carrier bag rather than the charity's own bag. To be a charity shop Head was to be associated with this kind of disdain.

Identity, then, and its assertion between levels three and five, was one of the main drivers of charity shop professionalisation. The transformation of charity shops from semi-permanent, chaotic jumble sales to well-ordered, well-presented shops with 20 year leases was partly about Heads making their environment fit into their, by now, more deeply internalised senses of self. I argue that these 'levels,' and the notion that self-awareness is on a sliding scale, are a useful tool for analysing identity.

8.4.2 Classification, Characterisation, Identification

In sub-section 2.3.3, I introduced the three terms classification, characterisation and identification. These refer to three separate processes that are often conflated in discussions of

identity. *Classification*, I suggested, should be seen as the process of distinguishing between things. Language is a massive, pre-existing classification system, though of course the meanings of words are always subject to renegotiation. *Characterisation* is the process of identifying unique characteristics that 'stand for' objects or people, such as 'the white chest of drawers'. Both these processes are about identifying things or people. The first is about making things distinct and the second is about making them distinctive, so they mirror levels two and three of the sense of self. The third process, *identification*, involves identifying *with* something. It is about defining yourself through association with something or someone else. "I am British" is an *identification*. "There are British, there are French, there are Germans" is an example of *classification*. "British people are uptight, French people are smelly, Germans are soulless" is an example of *characterisation*. Here is an example from the data containing all three 'processes' in one flow of talk:

Kim Noakes: Well, there's property, marketing .. accounting, of course .. and retailing! I'm a retailer. That means I focus on the operational side, the shops themselves, and getting it all together, the three Ps. You know; people, place, product .. basic principle of retailing.

These three terms have been very useful in analysing the empirical materials. We saw that most of the Heads classified their sectoral shift in similar ways, stressing the differences inherent in the sectoral positioning but the similarities inherent in dealing with shops. They also noted the major differences in charity shops, particularly the voluntary nature of the goods and labour. In terms of characterisation, however, there were noticeable differences of emphasis. In defining what 'charity shops' or 'the sector' were about, many focused on the retailing techniques, but some focused on its charitable nature, its uniqueness both as a form of fundraising and as a form of retailing. Yet interestingly, in terms of identification, there is again near universal agreement that they are all charity shop Heads. The ACS has 180 members, out of around 220 'known' charity shop organisations, which signifies that a huge proportion of those who I would classify as part of the charity shop sector also *identify* with the sector – ACS membership is an identity statement.

The differences of characterisation and yet similarity of classification and identification have led, I suggest, to the ACS becoming a key forum in which characterisations are debated. Heads agree they are part of the charity shops sector, but differ over exactly what that sector is or should be like. At its broadest, there is agreement that the sector is 'charities that run shops', but of course charities such as RNLI, English Heritage and The National Trust (all charities that run shops) have decided that they do not identify with the charity shops sector – despite being invited by the ACS to join. Their bought-in goods souvenir shops are, these charities feel, too different. They are not 'identical' enough to 'identify'.

Classification, characterisation, and identification are not, therefore, equivalent processes in a sequence. Classification is a crucial yet usually less conscious process, as Douglas (1966) demonstrated. We often classify without knowing it, based on our linguistic conventions. This is what makes classification such a potentially pernicious process, as Auschwitz proved.

Characterisation can be as equally pernicious, distilling the complexity of things into one or two 'key' characteristics. It is in fact a crucial political (and epistemological) act. One vital role of the social researcher is to highlight hegemonic discourses (Bauman 1999) and I would suggest that this involves attending to both classification and characterisation processes. To say these processes are potentially pernicious must not, however, blind us to their potential usefulness. This is to fall into the trap of saying that because power is abused we must do away with power, instead of accepting the inevitability of power and focusing on the abuse. On some occasions, as good citizens (and depending on our own political stances), we must guard against certain classifications and characterisations and intervene vigorously when they occur. On other occasions, as good social researchers, we must illustrate how, when and where these processes are being used, so those who are centrally involved can be made aware of them, but without necessarily insisting that any classification or characterisations is better or worse.

8.4.3 Personal, Organisational and Sectoral Identities

Personal, organisational and sectoral identities are related and co-emergent. Organisations have identities (though not senses of self) ascribed to them by people through company logos, letterheads, offices, speaking and writing styles, and the look and behaviour of organisational members. These identities are *characterisations* of organisations (and are sometimes crudely referred to as their culture). Common identities include 'business-like', 'professional', 'aggressive', 'amateur', 'soft', 'chaotic', 'modern', 'vibrant', 'young' and 'old fashioned'. Sectors are like organisations, but more diverse and even harder to characterise accurately, though that does not stop people trying. Like Britishness, the more diverse the components within a classification, the harder (and more destructive) it is to characterise.

A statement about organisational identity from an organisational member often contains a sense of the members' personal identity, especially if that member is the organisation's Head. The term 'Head' has been used quite uncritically so far in this thesis. It does not deserve a complete deconstruction, but it is worth pointing out that if we use the body metaphor I would see the Head as the 'face' of the organisation rather than its 'brain', its identity rather than the source of its rational thought. The Head is one of the most powerful characterisers of the organisation and these characterisations are, I would argue, both a key influence on organisational practices and outcomes and strongly related to the Head's personal identity.

An innovative research method – the analysis of relations between organisations of different types – allowed us to observe processes of organisational identity. In the discussion of shops' relations with their parent charities, we saw that the charity often ascribed the shops organisation a characterisation (ascribed identities are always, I suggest, characterisations) such as 'bolshy', 'dirty', 'pushy' or 'aggressive'. It is important to stress that these ascriptions (characterisations) are related to the identities of those in the charity who make them. They are

part of the process of defining 'self' through 'other' (Hall 1998: 5), though cultural theories of this type tend to overdramatise the process just because it is normative. Just because a self characterises an other, we should not assume that the self is the generator of hegemonic discourses or the powerful who must be resisted. Such processes are far more everyday and, importantly, often represent powerlessness as much as power. While 'othering' statements are always normative and political, this does not make them 'wrong'. This research has shown that charity shop Heads are often unhappy about the characterisations ascribed to them (and their charity shop organisations) by the parent charities, and sometimes this bothers them and affects their status and identities, prompting the need for the ACS. But they do not necessarily worry into the night about these things. At worst, they feel "misunderstood". Of course, in some situations 'othering' processes are pernicious and lead to significant disadvantages for those who 'the powerful' characterise as being on the negative pole, but such situations are not universal; unlike gentle 'mis-characterisation'.

The final point to make about organisational and sectoral identities is that, because they are not attached to a sentient being, they can be less inherent or foundational. This allows them to be more strategic, and shift from one situation to another depending upon the others with whom the organisation must relate. As we saw with ShopsCom, the same organisation can be ruthless, efficient, needy, legalistic and bumbling, as the need directs, in a very short space of time. Indeed, different organisational members are able to strategically adopt these different characterisations of the organisation *simultaneously*, for the organisation is a fluid and symbolic notion rather than an emotional being with a 'will to fixity'.

8.4.4 Generating Identity

The final contribution to theories of identity is the apparently simple point that identities – including classifications, characterisations and identifications – are produced in interaction. As discussed earlier (2.3.3) this is not to argue that we are all able to paint our identities each day onto an empty canvas. Identities learnt through childhood socialisation, language, or societal saturation may all appear to be 'natural' or 'essential'. This makes them crucial for social and cultural analysis. The argument here is that there are a class of identities that are *more* made up, more contingent and less fixed; and that these are also crucial but have been substantially under-researched. By discussing 'organising identities' I have tried to access those identities within organisational contexts that are *contingent* on organisational contexts. Gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class and so on are crucial identities within organisations, as they are in all areas of life. But occupational and workplace identities are also crucial to organisational life; and are contingent on it.

The process of becoming and remaining a 'member' of a certain job role, occupation, career or profession is a formative adult experience that shapes much of our subsequent working lives.

This thesis has not focused on the way people shape themselves to fit extant roles, occupations or professional identities – replying “Yes, that’s me” to the interpellated discourses that “hail them” and then finding themselves “chained” by these discourses (Hall 1996: 5-6). It examined the process by which new roles, occupations and professional identities are *formed* to fit the people that want them to exist. The thesis demonstrated the *productive* nature of identity, which is not to say this is the only process in town, but simply to argue that it is a process that matters.

This discussion is in fact clarified by reference to the terms classification, characterisation and identification. Althusser’s process of interpellation, at least as Hall (1996) and Woodward (1997) portray it, limits itself to identification: deciding (or not) to identify with something, shouting back, ‘Yes, that’s me’ or ‘No, that’s not me’ to the identity discourses that hail us. This study of charity shop Heads highlights that, while identification processes (‘identifying oneself with’) are indeed important, processes of characterisation are at least as important too. Heads were involved less in arguing whether or not they were a charity shop Head than in deciding what a charity shop Head should actually be. We saw this in the ACS Kitemark, where Heads engaged in a debate over what was and was not acceptable in the charity shop sector and its inner circle.

The thesis also highlighted the difference between narratives and practices. Whether or not we decide that discourses should apply only to what people say about themselves or also to their (discursive) practices (Thrift 1996), most social researchers accept the validity of distinguishing between describing your attitudes to doing, and actually doing. Even though the distinction is problematic and only a matter of degree, it nevertheless makes *some* sense. Only by comparing participant-observation with interview data can this distinction be researched.

All the Heads practised what they preached, yet all also undermined their talk through their actions. Chris and Susan both asserted the same identities they had expressed in interview. Chris was powerful, controlling and authoritarian, offering the kind of leadership he believes his organisation needs. Susan was very relaxed, personally close, but non-managerial, offering the kind of leadership she believes her organisation needs. Their asserted narratives did not operate as a straitjacket for either of them. Chris tried being more open and democratic. Susan tried being more authoritarian. Both ‘tried on’ new identities. Their stated identifications were simply resources they could draw on in interaction. Conversely, Eve is faced with a complexity of organisational objectives and she consciously tries to perform them all. As part of these objectives, at least according to her interpretation, she must adopt a very particular identity that would not come naturally to most people – patient, democratic, open, and facilitative. In practice this identity slips away or is asserted when it is not appropriate, simply because it is what she thinks she should be like.

Discourses of identity and discursive practices are thus intimately related, but neither is fixed and unchanging, determining the other.

8.5 Theories of Professionalism

This thesis develops theories of professionalism by moving beyond the limited view of 'a professional' as a member of an expert occupational group towards 'professional' as a fluid but powerfully normative description that can be applied to all organisational actors and activities.

Notions of professionalism are crucial if we are to understand workplace practices and identities in contemporary British society. For too long 'professional' has been used to refer only to 'the professions': the expert, bounded communities discussed by Larson (1977) and Nixon (2000). Theory is being overtaken by events, for 'professional' has become a much broader term than that. It is now commonly used to refer to any action that is deemed appropriate (Garfinkel 1967), competent, or organisationally good. This last phrase points to the normative nature of the term as it is currently used. It seems that to be professional is almost an unequivocally good thing. Indeed, I would suggest that, as it is currently used, the term professionalism is more powerful than the 'entrepreneurialism' discussed by du Gay (1996b). Professionalism, therefore, is about much more than being a professional. It is about being professional (without the 'a') and can be performed by anyone: it is no longer strange to talk of dustmen, cleaners, and shop assistants doing their work 'professionally'.

This thesis has not researched how or why this democratisation of professionalism has developed: that would be a fascinating project. But it has shown that professionalism is used in a wide variety of ways in the charity shop sector and is strongly related to the professionalisation process. In other words, because the Heads' personal identities are so closely related to those of their organisations, the Heads' notions of professionalism are a powerful influence on their organising practices and their material outcomes.

8.6 Cultural and Economic Theory

This thesis demonstrates the overall thesis argument: that identity processes are a crucial influence on the activity of people in organisational contexts and the outcomes of that activity. In other words, cultural analysis is indispensable to explanations of economic phenomena.

The overall thesis argument has already been developed through the four previous discussions, which I hope is a sign of a focused thesis. Here, it is necessary only to summarise. Identity is a complex and at times seductive term that can trap the unwary social researcher. But it is attractive for a very good reason: it offers a way of interpreting the relationship between human beings and human doings. The way people think and feel about themselves influences their behaviour.

This study has attempted to explain a set of material, economic outcomes – the massive growth of the charity shops sector in terms of shop numbers, sales and profit during the 1980s and 1990s, and the 1998-2001 crisis – through a focus on the identifications of a key generation of charity shop Heads. Charity shop professionalisation was about business-based decision-making. But such decision-making was itself implicated in social identities. We should not cut up human activities into the rational, the cultural, and the emotional; some about economics, some about identity. On the contrary, we must learn to think of all human activity as involved in all of these things, and much else, simultaneously.

The three analytical chapters each demonstrate this point. The new immigrant Heads in ~ 5 ~ *Identity Shift* combined their 'retailer' identities with their analyses of the retail potential of the charity shops they inherited, producing an extremely successful process of change and growth in the sector. The Heads in ~ 6 ~ *Organisations and Sectors* attempted to secure the best for their businesses by presenting themselves and their organisations in a variety of ways: as different from their charities, as similar to other charity shop organisations, and as many things in dealings with private sector businesses. Their identities did not cause these activities, but were rather mutually constituted with them. Being and doing are two sides of the same coin. Finally, the Heads in ~ 7 ~ *Asserting Professionalism* were running the detail of their businesses and making decisions in meetings with their direct sub-ordinates. These decisions were sometimes about business issues, but were always about the assertion of identities. Each meeting showed the *performance* of management: the unsure adoption of masks and behaviours by the Heads in an attempt to appear how they think they should; and the assertion of their less conscious, assumed doings and beings. Workplace and organisational practices are inseparable from identity processes, and our research must reflect this.

8.7 Re-Placing Identity

Finally, the thesis indicates that places are a crucial medium through which identities are asserted and understood. This final section addresses this spatialised nature of identity.

There are two spaces in which the Heads' identities are most clearly asserted: the actual shops and the head office. But the nature of the identity assertions are quite different in each. Most Heads saw their actual charity shops as places that represented them, that stood for them, personally, and for their organisation. *By my shops, you shall know me.* In Analysis (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) we saw how Chris Vaughan of ShopsCom was initially reluctant to become involved with charity shops at all, because they were "scruffy and tertiary". Chris still rarely visits his shops. When he does it is usually only at their opening and on these occasions he mainly stands outside. In their clean and pristine state, the new shops are 'safer' for him to visit. There is less chance he will be sullied by their dirt and confusion. Likewise Sasha Grant noted that shops had the status of "a leper colony" when he first joined Ginger Shops. Susan Parker complained that shops were seen "as trade, as second-hand, as dirty" and not properly appreciated by the other staff at her Hospice. Kim Noakes bemoaned the fact that all charity shops seem to end up as identical, whoever runs them. They are hard to differentiate from each other, especially through their paradoxically 'unique-and-therefore-similar' stock. It is very difficult to brand charity shops with the Head's own, individual mark. This challenges the Heads' identities as powerful change agents.

All these examples demonstrate that the Heads assume that other people 'read off' the nature of the organisation, and its Head, from its most physical manifestation – its high street shops. In other words, the Heads *identify with* the shops and assume that others identify them likewise. They therefore wish the shops to be *characterised* in a way that does justice to how they themselves would like to be seen: 'professional', clean and tidy, friendly, smart, contemporary, or whatever. This is about status and identity, and the deliberate production of places as 'markers' for characterisation.

Neither Susan nor Eve have this type of relationship with their shops. It is true that these issues of characterisation are present for both of them. Recall, for example, Susan's pride in her favourite shop, the one that she and her husband had worked on themselves, laying the new floor and painting it. Yet in this example lies the paradox of Susan's closeness. On the one hand, she is physically on her hands and knees making this shop how she wants it to be – far closer than Chris or many other Heads will ever come to 'producing' their shops as places. On the other hand, she has a distance from her shops. Because she is personally close to the paid staff and volunteers who run her shops, she also feels that the shop is in some way 'theirs'. Chris' distance from the shops paradoxically makes them a closer aspect of his organisational characterisation, because he sees them as 'his shops' rather than owned by the volunteers and shop managers. Being closer to these people would allow him to see that the shops are not

really (or not exclusively) his, but his distance from them heightens his sense that the shops are symbolic markers of his own identity.

If Chris was almost never in a shop (both during my fieldwork, and before and after – according to the comments of the research participants, including Chris himself) and Susan was almost always in one, Eve was in one just once during my fieldwork, at a full volunteers' meeting in a shop showing substantial discontent. Her role was to quell the shop volunteers' disquiet by talking with them and showing them that 'head office' was listening. Here she was quite clearly *in* the shop but not *of* the shop, highlighting the degree to which emotional ownership of the shop is intimately related to identity. Eve, like Susan, tended to stress her personal identification with the shops operation as a whole, vis-à-vis the rest of the charity, rather than her identification with the actual shops. Chris, almost fully separate from his parent charity, paid far less attention to characterising his differences at this organisational level. This implies that characterisation processes are essential when classification is less clear. Indeed, it tells us that characterisation is inherently about classification: in specifying how your 'self' is different to some 'other' you are inherently characterising these differences and thereby arguing that *these* differences matter. Chris has less need to make this characterisation because in ShopsCom the classification of 'shops' versus 'parent charity' is relatively clear. Susan and Eve both spend more time characterising their shop *organisations* than their actual shops because these are the primary classificatory battles they are involved in.

In summary then, places are essential markers for identification, characterisation and classification. Their physicality, their visibility, and the fact that they can be characterised in certain ways (professional, smart, homely, etc.) makes them crucial in the Heads' portrayals and understandings of themselves. Yet distance from and closeness to the shops appears to operate paradoxically, such that the less real the contacts with these actual places (and their complexity and multiple emotional ownership), the more easily they can be incorporated into symbolic senses of self. This is a crucial finding: that the relationships between place identity and personal identity is based on assumptions that work well symbolically but are problematised by practical application. This is similar to social constructivist arguments about the nature of nationalism (see especially Anderson, 1983). But this present thesis demonstrates that the relationship between place and identity need not be limited to studies of nationhood.

The other places that matter in the construction of Heads' identities are their own head offices, by which I mean both their own personal room and the building which contains the offices of the other members of their 'head office' team. Fascinatingly, these places relate to personal identity in very different ways to the more symbolic 'shops'. There are symbolic aspects to the head offices, of course. Chris has an ante-chamber to his office. His office cannot be accessed directly from the corridors of the building. One must pass through another room, which is policed by his Personal Assistant. No other staff member has this office geography. His office is the largest in the building and on the building's top floor. His finance manager has the

second-largest office. The symbolism of room size was aptly demonstrated by this same finance manager at a Summer Conference – the annual meeting of all field management. He found that his room was smaller than Chris', and promptly changed it to a room the same size as Chris'. I heard him telling the story to his colleague in a tone that suggested he felt he had been personally slighted by the manager of the complex in which the two day Conference was held.

But rooms and offices lose their symbolic nature through everyday practice. Their symbolism was there in the original decisions about design, layout and occupancy and may still be experienced by someone visiting the Head for the first time, but over time this symbolism is eroded by practice, is somehow normalised or taken for granted. Chris' room may be slightly larger than everyone else's, but it is not ostentatious and does not really strike one as being that special. It is very tidy and well organised and is dominated by a map of the country showing every shop with a pin, but these elements are not so much conscious identity assertions or strivings as representations of how Chris organises, how he works, what he likes and doesn't like – what he is like. His room is not really 'how he wants to be' but 'how he is'. They are more level three of selfhood than level five. Throughout the head office building, different rooms had different flavours, some tidy and quite empty like Chris', some full and chaotic, some tidy but busy, some shared, some heavily personalised with family photos and 'funny' cartoons about work (particularly about gender at work), some relatively clinical and impersonal. There was little sense that these rooms, these places, were symbols of identity in a strongly assertive sense. Rather, they seemed simply lived in, less conscious expressions of the way people are.

This was even more the case with Eve. Her office is also her home; in fact, her own bedroom – a very personal place that is to some extent about 'who you are' but is not usually about 'display' to others. Her bedroom was relatively small, with a bed, a filing cabinet and a cluttered computer desk. She has no office in a head office building. Her parent charity does have a head office that she spends time in, but only in meeting rooms or other people's offices. She meets her Shop Co-ordinators in hired rooms in hotels and conference centres. The Shop Co-ordinators also work from home. VolShop therefore has no distinct building of its own, which is in itself an important symbol of its integration with the parent charity. This also indicates the degree to which VolShop, in terms of organisational cultures, is more about people than places. Both Eve and VolShop display a less spatialised sense of organisational identity, focusing more on relations between people than on the look of their shops. This is one aspect of the 'voluntary sector' version of professionalism espoused by Eve, counter to the stricter 'retail' professionalism of ShopsCom. Relating identities to places is therefore culturally specific (though very widespread and certainly 'real') as opposed to a human universal.

For Susan, the hospice building is the more symbolic place in her identity creation and assertion; the shops are more practical, everyday places. The hospice is symbolic not of her ability to assert a conscious identity, a certain way of being, but because it symbolises her *lack*

of ability to assert anything about herself, or, particularly, the shops. The hospice is building is characterised by 'medicine', 'dignity', 'hygiene', and 'compassion'; not 'charity', 'dirt', or 'trade'. There is no place for the shops, it seems, in the hospice – there is room only for the money the shops generate, and even this is rarely spoken of, even amongst staff and certainly never with patients. This relates to the point made above about the key identity 'battle' that is faced by Susan – her need to assert the importance of the shops in a Hospice that seems to underestimate and forget them. For her, the shops are the more everyday places, where she practices being a Head relatively less consciously, just getting on with it, as Chris does in his own office. Yet the shops, too, are not really hers. They are owned more by the shop managers and volunteers. She has no real symbolic place of her own – and this is itself symbolic of her identifications: (a) with the shops but not owning individual shops; and (b) as someone who must battle to make the shops visible to the Hospice.

In summary, therefore, some places are about a display of the self, an identity assertion, a conscious striving. Some may say a little about who you are but are really more personal than symbolic, less likely to be consciously asserted, not intended to be read as a 'display' of self. Some places take on symbolic meaning and become the focus for the display of one's self. Other places are less symbolic, which is not to say that they are less related to one's identity, only that they are more about the more 'natural', lower levels of selfhood. Organisational identities are therefore expressed through places, but not equally through all places. By differentiating between places in this way, social scientists may be able to improve their understandings of the spatialised nature of identity.

I want to make one final point about the spatiality of charity shop organising and Heads' identities. These two potentially symbolic and potentially everyday places – the head offices, and the shops – must also be seen as intimately connected with each other; but not equally. In particular, much head office activity is about: (a) overcoming distances by extending the reach of the desires and commands of those at head office out to the shops; and (b) bringing the shops back into the head office, particularly through the creation of complex, centralised datasets. In this way, Heads such as Chris use head office technologies and practices of power to try to create places (shops) displaying certain identities. At the same time, those in the shops, particularly the potentially difficult-to-manage volunteers, view much of this head office striving as unnecessary and impotent meddling that challenges their own unalterable ownership of the shop. There is a battle for the production of the shop spaces and this battle is about both identity and, crucially, power. But that, as they say, is another thesis.

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~ Appendix A ~

Interview Schedule

Introduction

- ➔ Introduce myself where necessary
- ➔ Read Ethics Protocol and test recorder
- ➔ Explain recorder's use
- ➔ Mention the three parts of the interview:
 - Your Background and Experiences of Charity Shops
 - Your Work with Others Inside and Outside Your Organisation
 - The Future of Charity Shops

Part One - Your Background, and Experiences of Charity Shops

1. To begin, I wonder if you could tell me, very briefly, the story of your career, including how you got into charity shop management?
 - retailing/charity/other background?
 - why chose charity / charity shops?
 - do you remember your first impressions of charity shops?
2. How different is running charity shops from other management work you've done?
 - unusual style of work/ 'atmosphere'?
 - non-profit aims change the methods of working?
 - managing volunteers?
 - staff more committed?
 - more/less rewarding?
3. Could you tell me what sort of things you do in a typical day?
 - job role, strategically?
 - everyday minute-by-minute?
 - who dealing with?
 - which management ideas/principles do you try to apply in your daily work?

Part Two - Your Work with Others Inside and Outside Your Organisation

4. How close do you feel to the actual shops you run?
 - what organisational structure (branch, hierarchies, flat)?
 - how do you know what they're doing?
 - informal data?
 - what data tell you the most about the shops?
 - how are you able to influence what they do?
 - prefer universality or local differences? put up with local differences?

5. Could you tell me a little about the decision-making processes in your chain of shops?
 - delegation and devolution of power?
 - authority and autonomy?
 - strategic vs. operational?
6. What do you look for in an ideal charity shop manager, area manager, and regional manager? (where appropriate)
 - commercial or charity experience?
 - skills or enthusiasm?
 - charity motivation?
7. How do you want members of the public, ideally, to relate to your charity shops?
 - customer relationship? donors? volunteers?
 - as 'charitable'?
 - role in community?
 - long-term loyalty?
8. What kind of relationship do you and the shops have with the rest of the charity?
 - personal and organisational relationship?
 - close or distant?
 - trust?
 - friendly or hostile?
 - do shops people feel misunderstood?
 - different cultures or mindsets or principles?
9. How much does the charity value your shops?
 - why originally set up?
 - what other income streams competing with?
 - in ADDITION to financial? e.g. public face
 - do the shops ever feel the need to justify their existence to the charity?
10. What kind of relationship do you have with the rest of the sector?
 - personal and organisational relationship?
 - which sector?
 - close or distant?
 - feel included or excluded?
 - co-operative or competitive? saturation?

Part Three - The Future of Charity Shops

11. What are the biggest challenges facing your shops over the next ten years?
 - tax regime?
 - sales drop?
 - volunteer drop?
 - stock drop?
 competition: other charity shops, other second-hand retail forms, other new retail?
12. What ideas or principles do you think are needed to keep charity shops successful?
 - volunteers expanded/replaced?
 - bought-in goods up/down?
 - more/less professional?
 - more/less commercial?
 - branding? the charity/the products?
 - price up/down?
 - shifting location (out-of-town sites?)

~ Appendix B ~

Participant-Observation Fieldwork

These three tables detail the activities I undertook in ShopsCom, HospiShop and VolShop. Pages 1-747 of the research diary were from my time with ACS and also included notes from PhD supervision meetings and other items and articles of interest. There are four research diary page numbering codes. 'A' relates to the main set of diaries with one set of numbers. 'SCX' is the ShopCom Extra diary, written on paper supplied for the Summer Conference and numbered separately. 'B' and 'C' are diaries with their own page numbers.

B.1 ShopsCom

<i>Date</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Research Diary</i>
Wed 9 June 1999	shop visit with Area Manager	A 748-765
Thurs 10 June 1999	Head Office, talk with Chris, go through his in-tray, meeting with G-Staff, meeting with Paul, meeting with Karen	A 766-777
Tues 15 June 1999	Chris meeting with Canex on personnel matters, informal interviews with two property managers, observing office work in the property department	A 778-807
Wed 16 June 1999	Reading notice board, marketing meeting, talk with Chris	A 808-839
Tues 22 June 1999	Work through Chris' post with him, informal interview with Karen from marketing	A 840-859
Wed 23 June 1999	Regional Managers Meeting	A 860-927
Fri 25 June 1999	Informal talk with personnel manager, I read Chris' quarterly report to his Board, summarising ShopsCom's performance, etc., informal talk with finance director, arranged forthcoming activities	A 938-968
Tues 29 June 1999	In a shop, no managers except paid shop manager, working all day there, sorting and hanging	A 969-973
Thur 1 July 1999	Day with a Regional Manager, in his car, driving around south England chatting, occasionally stopping at shops, judging a new shop site	A 974-983
Fri 2 July 1999	Day with an Area Manager, two shops visited, both "inspected" by me and the AM, he explains his work to me in detail	A 984-998
Mon 5 July 1999	Recording my general impressions and thoughts about the fieldwork so far, producing a list of detailed questions to ask Chris, going through Chris' paperwork	A 998-1016
Wed 7 July 1999 & Thur 8 July 1999	Summer conference – meeting with all AMs, RMs and senior management at a big conference centre	SCX 1-96
Fri 9 July 1999	Final meeting with Chris, go through all my questions	A 1017-1042

B.2 HospiShop

Date	Activities	Research Diary
Thur 15 July 1999	"Sex, drugs and rolling tills"; arrival scene, agree some activities, talk about Susan's role and visit three shops with Susan	B 1-12
Fri 16 July 1999	"Wasted"; working all day with van driver Pete, taking waste to dump and collecting clothes, chatting and visiting shops all day	B 13-25
Mon 19 July 1999	"Research by Hanging Around (and Hanging Clothes)"; all day in a shop	B 26-30
Tues 20 July 1999	"Nowt so Queer"; working in a different shop, lots of stories about weird customers	B 31-49
Wed 21 July 1999	"Material Practices"; in a different shop, I get serious training about pricing	B 50-61
Fri 23 July 1999	"Cash Flow"; I work on the till all day in a different shop, Susan is there at first, I catch the flow of talk between her and the managers, and also customers' practices	B 62-67
Mon 26 July 1999	"Doctors and Nurses"; the Hospice AGM, in which shops are hardly mentioned, so Susan is upset	B 68-75
Wed 28 July 1999	"Stolen moments"; I catch a thief! working in a shop all day, I also spend too much	B 76-85
Thur 29 July 1999	"Only Collect"; me and Pete out in the van on a serious collecting expedition, meeting interesting (and often bereaved) people; we're usually there before the undertaker.	B 86-91
Fri 30 July 1999	"Good Buy"; I buy an ancient computer in a shop; I attend Susan's meeting with her boss, and work in the office with Susan for a bit	B 92-98

B.3 VolShop

Date	Activities	Research Diary
Fri 19 Nov 1999	"Homework!"; arrival scene, at Eve's home office	B 99-116
Tues 23 Nov 1999	Meeting for both shops and fundraising in the South	B 117-130
Wed 24 Nov 1999	In a shop, no work to do, everyone just gossips and criticises the absent volunteer shop manager, inner London	B 131-133
Thur 25 Nov 1999	"The Researcher as Stupid Git!" In the same shop, it seems I've rubbed someone up the wrong way; I work on the Christmas card display	B 134-138
Tues 7 Dec 1999	Shops Co-ordinators Team Meeting	B 139-160
Thur 9 Dec 1999	"Betty's World"; day in a very different shop, deepest Surrey, much more work done, but lots of tension and gossip about each other; Maxine arrived later	C 1-17
Fri 10 Dec 1999	"Homeworking Two"; at Maxine, a Shops Co-ordinators, house as she works	C 18-37
Tues 14 Dec 1999	"Wimpey?"; with Paul, the only male Shops Co-ordinators on shop visits, including to Betty (see above), and interesting meeting between Paul and Betty	C 38-58
Fri 17 Dec 1999	"Meanwhile, back at HQ ..."; three rapid informal interviews with people in the charity, one who does the finances for the shops, one who is the boss of Susan but also runs volunteer support in fundraising too, and one in property. They talk about how shops impact upon their own daily work	C 59-80
Tues 21 Mar 2000	"Tops and Bottoms"; Eve and Paul 'go in heavy' at Betty's shops to try to 'put to bed' some serious problems that have been developing. Eve listens, and tells, lots of mutual misunderstanding	C 81-108
Fri 19 May 2000	Big meeting of all fundraising and shops teams, context of shops within the charity	C 109-133

~ Appendix C ~

NUDIST Codes

C.1 Interview Codes

These codes emerged from analysis of the interview transcripts. The 27 first-level codes are shown in bold, with their sub-codes.

```
;;GCV1|1
;;GCA1|2|NUD.IST 4.0, Project: Charity Shops Thesis, User: Richard
Goodall
;;GCZ369
1= Interviews

2= Characteristics
3= Gender
4= Male
5= Female
6= Age
7= 40-50
8= 50-60
9= Under 40
10= Years in Charity Shops
11= under 1
12= 1-3
13= 3-5
14= 5-10
15= over 10
16= Chain Size
17= under 10
18= 10-30
19= 30-100
20= 100-250
21= over 250
22= Commercial Experience?
23= No
24= Yes
25= Pro Shops?
26= Yes
27= No
28= Pro Volunteers?
29= Yes
```


30= No
31= Years in Job
32= under 1
33= 1-3
34= 3-5
35= 5-10
36= over 10

37 to 116 = CASE DATA - CONFIDENTIAL

117= Background
118= Interviewer
119= All
120= Model
121= RXIdeas
122= Interviewees
123= Background
124= Retail
125= Business
126= Charity
127= Charity Shop
128= Management
129= All background

130= Enter Charity Shops
131= Charity Motivation
132= Empire Building
133= Unemployed
134= Head hunted
135= Independence
136= A change
137= Avoid Toughness
138= Avoid Shareholders
139= Attractive Organisation
140= Use Retailing Skills
141= Location
142= Salary
143= Was Volunteer
144= Career Move
145= All

146= First Impressions
147= Positive
148= Negative
149= Culture Shock

150= Charity vs Other Shops
151= Similar
152= Different
153= Speed
154= Neither
155= Hospice vs Arts Org

156= Typical Day
157= Office Layout

158= The Business
159= Operational issues
160= Shop success factors
161= Pricing
162= Hagglng
163= Bargains
164= Ethics

165= People
166= Donors
167= Charity Motivation
168= Shopfits
169= Particular Charity
170= Customers
171= Service
172= Charity Motivation
173= Shopfits
174= Stigma
175= Particular Charity
176= Theft
177= Windows
178= Community Links
179= Shopfits
180= Stock
181= Distribution
182= Collection
183= Quality
184= Bought-in Goods
185= Furniture
186= Diversify
187= 50-50
188= Leases
189= Business locations
190= Public Relations
191= Detail
192= Ethos
193= Retailing
194= Innovation
195= Retail concept of charity shops

196= Management
197= Management Ideas
198= Anti-Theoretical
199= Management Style
200= Communication
201= Regional-Area Contact
202= Manager & Volunteer Contact
203= How Close
204= Cultural Distance
205= Figures
206= Paperwork
207= Managing Volunteers
208= Working Conditions
209= Ideal People
210= Regional Manager
211= Area Manager
212= Shop Manager
213= Volunteers
214= Actual People
215= Regional Manager
216= Area Manager
217= Shop Manager
218= Volunteers
219= Strategy vs operational
220= Staff motivation
221= 'Pay'
222= 'Charity'
223= 'Hobby'
224= 'Career'
225= 'Success'
226= Autonomy

227= Ownership
228= Retail Passion
229= Treated as People
230= Respected Leader
231= Fill days
232= Training

233= Organising
234= Structure
235= Intra-organisational Networks
236= Intra-organisational conflicts
237= Meetings
238= Decision-making
239= Centralise?
240= Universalise?
241= Cultures
242= Create
243= 'Profit' Culture
244= 'Charity' Culture
245= Shop vs HQ cultures
246= Size of
247= Hierarchies vs Flat
248= Activities
249= Formalisation
250= Change
251= Commercialism

252= Relations With Charity
253= Trustees
254= Fundraising
255= Relations with Donors
256= Cultures
257= Negative
258= Expectations
259= Personal
260= At Local level
261= Shops Charitable Role
262= Charity Structure
263= Distance
264= Charity Work
265= Ch Volunteers
266= Image - public perception
267= Belonging

268= Relations With Sector
269= Personal
270= ACS
271= Organisational
272= Co-operation
273= ACS
274= Benchmarking
275= CSG to ACS
276= Kitemark
277= Lobbying
278= Peer Pressure
279= Job Movers
280= Charity Superstore
281= Oxfam Price Survey
282= NGO Finance
283= Chain Figures
284= Local Level
285= Competition
286= Shop Cultures

287= Sector
288= Charity Shop Movement
289= Mimicing

290= Relations With Others

291= Shops Future

292= General Future
293= Market Saturation
294= Retrenchment
295= Mergers
296= Differentiation
297= Location
298= New Products
299= Staffing
300= Pricing
301= Threats
302= Rate Relief
303= VAT
304= EU Product
305= Too Many!
306= Rag Market
307= Unfair Competition
308= Bought-in Goods
309= Value Retailers
310= Supermarkets
311= Stock
312= Bought-in Goods
313= Expansion
314= Positive Future
315= Less Stigma
316= Recycling
317= Marketing
318= Growth & Sustainability
319= Customer Attitude
320= Need for Charities
321= High Street Role
322= More professional

323= Chain History

324= towns' economic history

325= Personal

326= Emotions
327= Confidence
328= Pride
329= Having Control
330= Customers Feel Good
331= Self Presentation
332= Belonging
333= Being Special
334= Family
335= Shop Atmosphere
336= Individualism
337= Volunteers

338= General Ch Culture

339= Methodology

340= Gender

341= Power

342= Data as control

343= Professionalism

344= Competency

345= An eye or nose

346= Business-like = competitive

347= Paid

348= Retail Professionalism

349= Charity Professionalism

350= Size

351= Small vs Large Conflict

352= Comments on Interview

353= Shop Social Interaction

354= Words

355= Levels

356= Salary & Pay

357= Strong & Strength

358= Control & Force

359= Atmosphere

360= Business

361= Profession..

362= Understand

363= Think

364= Do.. & Act..

365= Work

366= Fun

367= Money

368= Charit ..

369= Retail

370= Sector

C.2 Participant-Observation Codes

These codes emerged from analysis of the participant-observation research diaries. The 16 first-level codes are shown in bold, with their sub-codes. The five Major codes identified in the discussion of analysis (see section 3.4 above) are Professionalism (3 6), Power (3 7), Work Practices (3 8), Identities (3 9), and Organising (3 10).

::GCV1|1

::GCA1|2|NUD.IST 4.0, Project: Charity Shops Thesis, User: Richard Goodall

::GCZ289

2=(3 1) Methodology

3=(3 1 1) Constructing my Access

4=(3 1 2) Confidentiality

5=(3 1 3) Power

6=(3 1 4) My Role & Effect

7=(3 1 5) Questions

8=(3 1 6) Writing Ideas

9=(3 1 7) Status

10=(3 1 8) Research Diary

11=(3 2) Arrival Stories

12to 90 CODES NAME ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS - CONFIDENTIAL

91=(3 4) Organisational Co-operation

92=(3 4 1) Areas & Regions

93=(3 4 2) Shops & Marketing

94=(3 4 3) General

95=(3 5) Conflict

96=(3 5 1) Area Managers vs Shop Managers

97=(3 5 2) Regional Managers vs Area Managers

98=(3 5 3) Area Managers vs Volunteers

99=(3 5 4) Head vs HQ Staff

100=(3 5 5) HQ vs Regions

101=(3 5 6) HQ vs Shops People

102=(3 5 7) with predecessors

103=(3 5 8) Assistant Head vs Regional Managers

104=(3 5 9) Retailers vs Property

105=(3 5 10) Head vs Volunteers

106=(3 5 11) Shop Managers vs Volunteers

107=(3 5 12) Head vs Area Managers

108=(3 5 13) HQ vs Volunteers

109=(3 5 14) van vs shops

110=(3 5 15) shops vs other shops

111=(3 5 16) trustee vs meeting

112=(3 5 17) in shops

113=(3 5 18) Area Managers to Area Managers

114=(3 6) Professionalism (Organising Cultures)

115=(3 6 1) Decision-Making

116=(3 6 2) Soft vs Hard (Ask vs Tell)

117=(3 6 3) Charity vs Retailing

118=(3 6 4) Charity vs Commercialism & Business

119=(3 6 5) Looseness vs Tightness

120=(3 6 6) Honesty, Openness, Involvement

121=(3 6 7) Saying Thankyou
 122=(3 6 8) Universality
 123=(3 6 9) Organising vs Business
 124=(3 6 10) Retail vs Other Aspects
 125=(3 6 11) Professionalism
 126=(3 6 11 1) Competency
 127=(3 6 11 2) Knowledge
 128=(3 6 11 3) Expertise
 129=(3 6 11 4) Style
 130=(3 6 12) Evolution vs Revolution
 131=(3 6 13) Culture Shock
 132=(3 6 14) Territoriality
 133=(3 6 15) Creativity & Humour
 134=(3 6 16) Competitiveness
 135=(3 6 17) Structured-Formal vs Flexible-Informal
 136=(3 6 18) Trust
 137=(3 6 19) Hard Work
 138=(3 6 20) Voluntarism
 139=(3 6 21) Autocracy vs Democracy

140=(3 7) Power (Organising Technologies)
 141=(3 7 1) Hierarchies & Structures, & size ..
 142=(3 7 2) Autonomy vs Centralisation
 143=(3 7 3) Persuasion-Influence-Authority
 144=(3 7 4) Pressure
 145=(3 7 4 1) Success Factors
 146=(3 7 5) Personal & Social Politics
 147=(3 7 6) Management & Organising
 148=(3 7 7) Knowledge Data & Competency
 149=(3 7 7 1) Imagination
 150=(3 7 7 2) Data
 151=(3 7 7 3) Trials
 152=(3 7 7 4) Research
 153=(3 7 7 5) (In)Competent
 154=(3 7 7 6) Information
 155=(3 7 7 7) Experience
 156=(3 7 8) Procedures and Standards
 157=(3 7 9) Internal Meetings
 158=(3 7 10) Training & Promoting People
 159=(3 7 11) Recruitment
 160=(3 7 11 1) Psychometric Tests
 161=(3 7 12) Paperwork
 162=(3 7 12 1) Area Manager
 163=(3 7 12 1 1) Figures Information
 164=(3 7 12 1 2) Control Checklists
 165=(3 7 12 1 3) Other Information
 166=(3 7 12 2) Regional Manager
 167=(3 7 12 3) Checklists
 168=(3 7 12 4) Letters, Policies & Agreements
 169=(3 7 12 5) Head
 170=(3 7 12 6) Property
 171=(3 7 12 7) Collection
 172=(3 7 12 8) Shop Manager
 173=(3 7 12 9) Accounts
 174=(3 7 13) Categorisation
 175=(3 7 14) Challenge & Resistance
 176=(3 7 15) Staff & Volunteer Motivations
 177=(3 7 16) Team Working
 178=(3 7 17) Decision-Making
 179=(3 7 18) Communication
 180=(3 7 19) Competition
 181=(3 7 20) Bodies, Boundaries, Travel & Distances
 182=(3 7 21) Leadership & Change

183=(3 7 22) Computers

184=(3 8) Work Practices (and Cultures)

185=(3 8 1) Volunteers

186=(3 8 2) Shop Staff

187=(3 8 3) Managers

188=(3 8 4) Area Managers

189=(3 8 5) Regional Managers

190=(3 8 6) Field Office

191=(3 8 7) Assistant Head

192=(3 8 8) Marketing

193=(3 8 9) Property

194=(3 8 10) Personnel

195=(3 8 11) Head Office

196=(3 8 12) Head

197=(3 8 13) Accounts

198=(3 8 14) Van Driver

199=(3 9) Identities

200=(3 9 1) Gender

201=(3 9 2) Organising Cultures

202=(3 9 3) Skills

203=(3 9 4) With the Org

204=(3 9 5) Confidence

205=(3 9 6) Organisation

206=(3 9 7) Professional

207=(3 9 8) Class

208=(3 9 9) Age

209=(3 9 10) Descriptions

210=(3 9 11) Normality

211=(3 9 12) Place

212=(3 9 13) Desire

213=(3 9 14) Ethnicity

214=(3 9 15) Personal Relations

215=(3 10) Organising (Division of Labour)

216=(3 10 1) Volunteers

217=(3 10 2) Paid Shop Staff

218=(3 10 3) Area Managers

219=(3 10 4) Regional Managers

220=(3 10 5) Field Officer

221=(3 10 6) Property

222=(3 10 7) Personnel

223=(3 10 8) Marketing

224=(3 10 9) Accounts

225=(3 10 10) Secretarial

226=(3 10 11) Assistant Head

227=(3 10 12) Head

228=(3 10 13) Me

229=(3 10 14) Van Driver

230=(3 10 15) Doings

231=(3 10 16) Boss of Head

232=(3 11) Operational

233=(3 11 1) Stock

234=(3 11 1 1) Categories

235=(3 11 1 2) Work

236=(3 11 1 3) Collections

237=(3 11 1 4) Sorting

238=(3 11 1 5) The Business

239=(3 11 1 6) Bought-in Goods

240=(3 11 2) Pricing

241=(3 11 2 1) Stock Categories

242=(3 11 2 2) Material Practices
 243=(3 11 3) Public Relations
 244=(3 11 4) Shop Demographics
 245=(3 11 5) The Business
 246=(3 11 6) Rag
 247=(3 11 7) ShopFits
 248=(3 11 7 1) Quality
 249=(3 11 8) Costs

250=(3 12) Social Interaction

251=(3 12 1) with me
 252=(3 12 2) in shops
 253=(3 12 3) intra-organisational
 254=(3 12 4) with rag
 255=(3 12 5) with charity
 256=(3 12 6) with van collectors
 257=(3 12 7) with contractors
 258=(3 12 8) presence & absence

259=(3 13) Atmosphere

260=(3 13 1) xxx Shop [xxx = particular shop location, CONFIDENTIAL]
 261=(3 13 2) Accounts Area
 262=(3 13 3) Property Area
 263=(3 13 4) Marketing Area
 264=(3 13 5) Head's Office
 265=(3 13 6) Field Office
 266=(3 13 7) Regional Mngr's Car
 267=(3 13 8) Head Office General
 268=(3 13 9) Regional Managers Meeting
 269=(3 13 10) Summer Seminar
 270=(3 13 11) xxx shop
 271=(3 13 12) xxx shop
 272=(3 13 13) xxx shop
 273=(3 13 14) xxx shop
 274=(3 13 15) xxx shop
 275=(3 13 16) xxx's House
 276=(3 13 17) xxx meeting [xxx = particular meeting location, CONFIDENTIAL]
 277=(3 13 18) xxx shop
 278=(3 13 19) xxx shop
 279=(3 13 20) xxx's House
 280=(3 13 21) xxx shop

281=(3 14) (Pre-)Conceptions of 'Charity'

282=(3 15) External Interface

283=(3 15 1) Commercial
 284=(3 15 2) Sectoral
 285=(3 15 3) State
 286=(3 15 4) Charity

287=(3 16) Cases

288=(3 16 1) CONFIDENTIAL
 289=(3 16 2) CONFIDENTIAL
 290=(3 16 3) CONFIDENTIAL
 :;GCF

~ Appendix D ~

Charity Shop Numbers

The table below shows how the data for Figure 4.1 were produced. I collated shop number data for each charity from 1989 to 2001 using all published sources. No charities had data for all 12 years. Whilst the sample changes from year to year, every pair of consecutive years has a sizeable number of charities with data in both years, allowing us to reliably calculate the net change in shop numbers for these charities and the net percentage increase or decrease from one year to the next. For example, we have data for 11 charities for both 1989 and 1990; their shop numbers grew 17.4% over the year, from 2,425 to 2,847. By repeating this process for each year, we can produce a set of percentage increases in shop numbers for each period, shown in column three of the table below.

Growth in charity shop numbers, 1989 to 2001

Year	Total UK charity shops	Percentage change in shop numbers from the previous year	Charities in sample	Shops in sample
1989	3,500	-	-	-
1990	4,109	17.4%	11	2,410
1991	4,282	4.2%	11	2,447
1992	4,806	12.2%	53	3,097
1993	5,169	7.5%	53	3,476
1994	5,542	7.2%	54	3,756
1995	5,840	5.4%	60	4,146
1996	6,194	6.1%	53	4,199
1997	6,487	4.7%	44	4,440
1998	6,783	4.6%	51	4,543
1999	6,924	2.1%	54	5,341
2000	7,014	1.3%	66	5,530
2001	6,922	-1.3%	83	6,137

Using the best guess of 3,500 charity shops in 1989 and these year-on-data growth data, it is possible to estimate absolute shop numbers, as shown in column two. The first two years are

less secure because of the small sample, but the eleven charities giving data in these early years were large charities covering a good proportion of the sector. Note that the fifth column is for information about the sample size only and represents a constantly changing sample; these are not the shop numbers from which the percentage growth figures in column three are calculated.

